

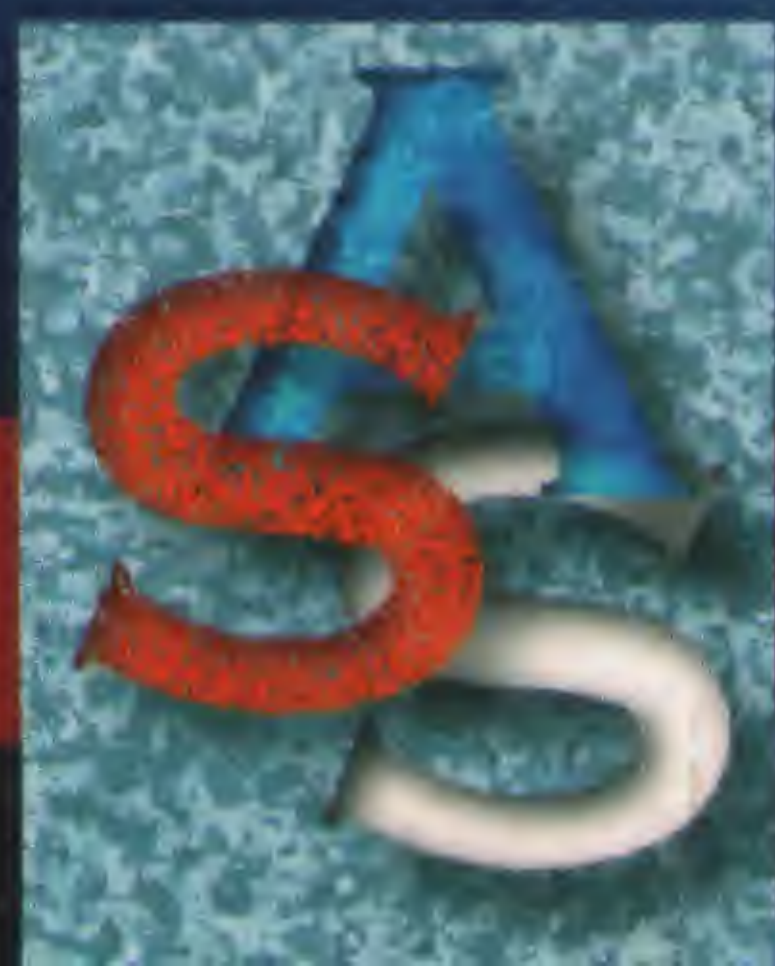
# Essays

IN AMERICAN STUDIES



CROSS-CULTURAL  
PERSPECTIVES

POLIS Publishers



American Studies  
Series







# *Essays*

IN AMERICAN  
STUDIES

## **CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**

Edited by  
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## Introduction

This is the second book in the American Studies Series that has gathered the work of various academics from the field of American Studies who have worked in Bulgaria in the last few years. There is, however, one notable exception, Sneja Gunew, connected in some other ways to Bulgaria. Her essay turned to be symptomatic for the idea that has enlivened the present project – the attempt to explain national cultures and nation-states using the methods of cross-cultural studies and of comparativism. This crossing of boundaries is for some of the contemporary scholars one of the greatest achievements of the late-twentieth-century academic discourse, while for others, it is one of the curses of present-day research. As it will become obvious from the pages to follow both the contributors and the editor have taken to their hearts the former rather than the latter. This seems to be an inevitable part of what Lyotard calls “postmodern knowledge,” knowledge that refines our sensitivity for differences thus increasing our capacity to stand the immeasurable. That has made most of the essays turn to all these multicultural differences and similarities which, though in a often fragmented way, bespeak of characteristics and possible explanations of cultural and historic phenomena that would have fallen stiff and flat if confined to the rigid boundaries of one field of inquiry or one-discipline methods of research.

The present collection of essays oversteps the disciplinary boundaries on another level, too. Unlike the first collection, this one has gathered together researchers from different branches of the humanities – literary and cultural studies, translation, anthropology, history, and political science. What unites all of them is their keen interest in the things American, projected in most of the cases on various cultural backgrounds. Thus the presumption that there exists a core area of research in every discipline is put into question and the identification of the overlappings has become more important than the rigorous pursuit of disciplined research.



All that accounts for the great diversity of the topics covered by this collection. I have chosen to start with two pieces that take a closer look at the interaction between Bulgarian and American cultures during the period of intense cultural revival in Bulgaria in the 19th century. The way Bulgarian cultural elite interpreted America then along with the influence the American missionaries exercised during that period is the subject of Vitana Kostadinova's essay, "Images of America or the American Presence in the Bulgarian Revival Period." The conclusion she reaches is that "America became a synonym for freedom and democracy, good education, emancipation of women, progress and modernity." The essay, however, does not see the interaction between the two cultures as one-directional; it stresses the fact that any attempt to find a direct influence is doomed to failure since the recipient culture played a very active role in constructing the image of America during this period, a role that was predetermined by the social and political realities of the times.

This is the core idea of the next essay by Betty Grinberg, "*Bulgarski Knizhitsi* and the First Translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Bulgaria." The political, ideological and cultural motives for choosing this particular text for translation are connected to the changes the translator introduced in the original. In this way the essay manages to bring forth different reference systems together in order to understand the mechanisms of establishing a national culture.

The nation-building is in the focus of Milena Katsarska's essay, "Construction of National Space Along the Railroad in American and Bulgarian Literature" in which the image of the train is discussed as one of the most important cultural symbols of the newly-established nations. Thus comparativism is used not only as a movement towards the understanding of the others but as a study of this movement as well. Comparing some of the most vivid examples of the use of this symbol in the two literatures, the essay suggests a new ways of crossing the disciplinary boundaries, relying heavily on the socio-cultural analysis of literary artifacts. Once again, Milena Katsarska proves that boundary regions are the most productive in scientific research if approached with knowledge and enthusiasm.

The next essay, "Ethnic Ghosts and Supernatural Forces: The Notion of Race and the Occult in the USA and Bulgaria at the Beginning of the 20th Century" moves further into the uneasy creation of the "imagined space" of



the nation and explores the strange union between the notion of race and the occult in the works of H. James and the teaching of Petar Danov at the beginning of the twentieth century. Discussing non-literary facts within the limits of literary studies serves as an impetus for enlarging the field's territory and once again proves that the knowledge of a literary fact can best proceed by searching for the different. The comparison between the two cultures also helps reveal the differences in the dynamics of the functioning of the ghostly and the racial in the two contexts.

Sneja Gunew's essay, "Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism: Between Race and Ethnicity" takes up the notion of race in order to discuss the differences between postcolonialism and multiculturalism in the USA, Canada and Australia. In her understanding "multiculturalism deals with theories of difference but unlike postcolonialism, which to a great extent is perceived to be defined by its specific historic legacies in a retroactive way, multiculturalism deals with the management (often compromised) of contemporary geo-political diversity in former imperial centres as well as their ex-colonies alike." These two terms are consequently discussed in relation to two other much debated terms, race and ethnicity as they have functioned in the three different literary contexts. This fruitful comparison proves once again that only in the process of tightening the ties between literature and other fields of knowledge is it possible to achieve a better understanding of the puzzling cultural phenomena of today.

The next two essays return to the question of the reception of American literary works by Bulgarian culture but this time in the present-day postmodern contexts. Alexandra Glavanakova's essay, "A Post-Totalitarian Mis/Reading of Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*," starts from the premises of the reader-response criticism in an attempt to explain the Bulgarian 'fate' of one of the most celebrated nowadays postmodern writers in the USA but finding this insufficient turns to some of the socio-cultural theories of the post-totalitarian societies to find surprising answers. The fact that the post-totalitarian identity is constructed through the discourse of modernity rather than through the one of post-modernity in Al. Glavanakova's view can serve as one of the possible answers for the misreading of Paul Auster by Bulgarian readers.

Another kind of misreading, this time moving along gender lines, is in the center of Kornelia Slavova's essay, "Disruptive Presence: Contemporary American Women Playwrights on the Bulgarian Stage." The essay is



concerned with the differences in the representation of gender issues in two plays by Paula Vogel and Eva Ensler and their Bulgarian staged versions. This comparison has helped find some interesting modifications of gender paradigms in post-totalitarian society.

Another multicultural comparison is the foundation of James Deutsch's essay "Folklore of the Academy." Working as a true ethnographer at the different East-European academic institutions he has taught for, the author has gathered a considerable amount of information to formulate and prove his bold hypothesis that folklore today is not confined to the remote rural areas not yet touched by industrialization but it is to be found in the most unlikely place, the academia. Stepping over disciplinary boundaries, the essay once again proves the fruitfulness of an approach that could bring together diverse cultures and notions and shows how boundary regions can become most productive in scientific discourse.

The last three essays take up a comparativist approach within historiography and offer new vistas in discussing some of the most crucial moments in twentieth-century American history. Vernon L. Pedersen's essay, "Russian Reds, Radical Roustabouts, and Unruly Women: Communism, Gender and American Anxiety" analyzes the "ominous air" that the press created around the Hunger marches of the 1930s and the "terrible confusion over gender roles" that was the by-product of this media campaign. In this way, the essay elucidates some of the aspects of the Great Depression in the USA that have remained obscured till now.

Kostadin Grozev's essay "Left and Right in American Elections: The 1972 Campaign, the Idea of Political Reform and the Left Wing of the Democratic Party" looks back at a very important moment in the history of American elections, the 1972 elections, not only for the sake of the purely historical analysis but also as a way of explaining the vicissitudes of the 2000 election campaign in the USA.

The last essay in this collection, "The United States and the Dissolution of Former Yugoslavia: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina" by Nadia Boyadjieva as if completes a circle and returns back to the question of the influence of the US on the countries in the Balkans. Though the analysis looks at the passivity and belated readiness of the US to take part in the solving of one of the regional conflicts in the Balkans and not at American cultural presence as the first essay does, it once again points to the necessity to know the Other in order to be able to understand oneself. The reasons for



the failure to prevent the conflicts in the Balkans, for the inappropriateness of some of the steps undertaken by American foreign policy, the essay proves, do not reside only in such American phenomena as the Vietnam syndrome or isolationism but also in the inability to understand the different cultural and social realities in this part of the world.

Such conclusions, I believe, make it even more urgent to continue to work for the further dissemination of approaches that would not only help the mixing of academic disciplines but would also be actively engaged in the crossing of national boundaries. My strong conviction is that such collections as the present one could make a real difference in this respect.

Madeleine Danova  
Sofia, 2001







## Images of Amerika<sup>1</sup> or the American Presence in the Bulgarian Revival Period

The chronological boundaries of the Bulgarian Revival Period are traditionally framed by Paisii's history of Bulgarians, written in 1762, and the National Independence, achieved in 1878. This was a period of opening for the outer world. The interest towards the others resulted in a nineteenth-century onrush to appropriate foreign literary achievements, compressing centuries of literary development and importing phenomena that contradicted one another historically or aesthetically. Bulgarian writers picked up different elements out of that literary amalgam. The patchwork thus created is very difficult to give account of and to analyze. One way of dealing with that non-homogeneity is segmenting the picture into fractions of foreign presence. The American presence at that time was not as formative as the Russian, or Greek, or German presence, and, for that reason, it has been less attractive to researchers. Nevertheless, it has its importance for a better understanding of the period and for tracing back the roots of some cultural phenomena. Speaking of the American presence in the Bulgarian Revival Period, there are three major aspects to be considered:

1. Images of America in the Bulgarian press.
2. American Protestant missionaries in Bulgaria.
3. Bulgarian Translations of American fiction.

The goal of this essay will be to paint the picture of the American presence in the period, giving an outline of each of the three aspects, and to discuss in greater detail the images of America constructed by the publications in Bulgarian newspapers and journals. That will include texts (translated, as well as written by Bulgarians) with a wide range of American topics.

The periodicals of the nineteenth century represented the United States as a symbol of freedom and democracy; as a stimulus in the struggle for independence; as an example for the importance of education. There were reports on the American political events and instances of economic progress, as well as articles reflecting social issues such as 'schools' or 'women'.



In the nineteenth century Europe paid heed to the development of the young American republic. The elections of a new president of the United States were closely observed. This example of democracy, something inexperienced and dreamt of, captured the attention of the Bulgarian press. Some of the newspapers used the occasion to claim the right of the peoples to determine their own political systems, to choose their future.

Even in a novel like *Characteristics of the American Way of Life*,<sup>2</sup> which was written as a reaction against the tendency to eulogize America, the American democracy remains highly respected; it was systematically and uncompromisingly defended. One of the characters advocates the republic throughout the novel and turns the closing up of the story into a triumphant celebration of his credo:

... let us, the French, who are not brothers of the Americans, neither by kinship nor by fraternization, and who have no reason to be envious of them, let us confess that never before has a greater republic existed, neither more industrious, nor more liberal, never has a republic been governed more wisely than America is, and its state of prosperity is not achieved by a person of genius, it is achieved by the republic itself. (84)<sup>3</sup>

By the end of the novel, the main character, a Frenchman of aristocratic origin, has come to appreciate the achievements of the American people and has given up denouncing the United States and the republic.

Putting aside the reasons that determined the choice to have this book translated, its value for the Bulgarian readers was in the praises lavished on freedom and democracy:

Indeed, their governing hand is not always firm but I would not wish them forced to have it firmer. Peoples are not inexperienced children to be led by the hand, they are reasonable and judicial beings. It is better if they have the freedom to make mistakes instead of being wrapped in regulations and orders that would restrain them from committing both good and evil. (84)

Whatever the origin of this ardent plea for the right of the peoples to determine their own form of government (whether included in the French original or added by the Bulgarian translator), for the Bulgarian readers it was an allusion to their state of dependence and carried out meanings totally detached from the story itself. This possibility to link the text to reality, again and again, to interpret it from a *hic-et-nunc* point of view, regardless of the time and place inscribed, is emblematic of one of the



peculiarities of the Bulgarian Revival Period, namely, that literature, on the one hand, and social and political life, on the other, were the two sides of the same thing. The implicit rule behind translation policies seemed to be to turn translated texts into an instrument for fighting for independence. The easy analogies between Bulgarian and American history made America a symbol of freedom. Indirect appeals for freedom were the means of evading censorship.

For these reasons, the *Tchitalishte* journal serialized a *History of the United States*,<sup>4</sup> choosing to elaborate on the War of Independence. In a foreword to the series, the editors focused the readers' attention on the 'meaningful' past of America. This past was seen as a prerequisite for the country's contemporary power and influence:

... it will be only to the benefit of the Bulgarian people to learn more about the Americans, about their present, as well as about their past (where the roots of the American greatness and power could be found). Without this knowledge we shall never have an adequate understanding of the accelerated development of this young country and the superiority that it has over the old European kingdoms. (727)

America was viewed as having paved the way for us as a young nation and, for that reason, Bulgarians were urged to become familiar with its history. To assure their safety, the editors added that their only goal was disseminating knowledge about various peoples and the world they lived in.

Instead of historical facts and events, Liuben Karavelov, a Bulgarian writer of the period, preferred presenting to his readers the great men behind them. Emblematic for the War of Independence are George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The *Nezavissimost* newspaper, edited by L. Karavelov, published outlines of their biographies.<sup>5</sup> In his book-review column in the *Znanie* journal, Karavelov welcomed the Bulgarian translation of M. Mignet's *Franklin's Life*.<sup>6</sup> What is worth paying attention to is that the imported 'icons' of the Bulgarian Revival Period were of the Franklin type: an advocate of the Enlightenment, a patriot, rational and didactic, the author of 'the moral codex' of the new strata of society. According to the *History of the United States* translated into Bulgarian and published in the *Tchitalishte* journal, B. Franklin turned out to be the central figure in the American War of Independence, while George Washington only came second.

Sticking to this non-confrontational policy, the editors could afford to present persons and events that could be interpreted as allusions to revolutionary ideas. Thus, the instrumental function of Bulgarian literature



in the struggle for national independence turned out to be crucial for the reception of America in the Bulgarian Revival Period.

We can find apologetic examples of the right to determine one's future in many texts. In some cases, this rhetoric was added by the translator, sometimes it even contradicted the author's style or manner of thinking but, no doubt, for the Bulgarian readers, all allusions to the yoke worked, realizing meanings that had nothing to do with the narrative of the particular work. This possibility (existing in the original text or brought about by the translator's interference) to bring the text up-to-date again and again, to associate it with one's own fate, regardless of the inscribed chronotope, expressed the correlation between literature and social and political life, typical of the Bulgarian Revival Period.

Translation policies were dominated by an ultimate goal, namely, that translated texts were to contribute to the struggle for freedom. Historical allusions and implications moderated direct political suggestions and were a way around censorship. That was why the translated *History of the United States*, focusing on the War of Independence, became a key text. It set a model for gaining independence and establishing a republic – the lofty ideals of the Revival Period.

A fictional image of the freedom fighter can be found in a story about a character named Toussen Leverture.<sup>7</sup> The text makes use of another major event in the history of the United States, the Civil War. The main character of the story looks like a collective image of the freedom fighter. He is a slave well-read in ancient Greek philosophy and a man of courage; in addition, he is skilled in gymnastics, a fact reminiscent of the training of fighters in Rakovski's legions. His uniform must have impressed the readers. The clothes he wore were both exotic and familiar. They were remindful of legendary Bulgarian freedom fighters. Thus, fiction became a part of reality, and a corrective of reality. Reading being, to a great extent, a process of discovering familiar things and connecting the unfamiliar to the familiar, Bulgarian readers could find bits and pieces of Bulgarian reality even in the texts that presented a totally different context. Using this mechanism of seeding allusions, the Bulgarian press 'canonized' a number of Americans.

The elections for a president of the United States in 1868 caught the attention of the Bulgarian press. The *Macedonia* newspaper elaborated on the event,<sup>8</sup> announcing the facts and offering a portrait of the president-elect Ulysses Grant. In a biographical sketch which ascribed to him highly positive characteristics, he was compared to Abraham Lincoln, who was quite popular



among Bulgarians. The readers associated his name with the Civil War and saw him as the symbol of the presidential institution in America.

In a story about Abraham Lincoln,<sup>9</sup> Petko Slaveykov turned the American hero of the Civil War into a paragon for his readers. The author subordinated the presentation of Lincoln's personality to the idea that the freedom of the people was more important than the will of the individual. The man who abolished slavery in the United States was a favorite of Karavelov's too. The Bulgarian writer extracted his biography from S. Smiles' *Self-Help* and translated everything "connected to this great man's life" publishing it in his article on bringing up children,<sup>10</sup> as well as in another one on upbringing and education.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from becoming a synonym to freedom, America was associated with the new times and with progress. Parallels made between Europe and America were always to the advantage of the United States. The first article to this effect in the Bulgarian press was 'The contemporary state of banks in Europe and in the United States'<sup>12</sup> and it was published in 1858. It informed the readers that over a very short period of time the United States had outdone the Old Continent in achievements. In 1859, the editor of the same journal gave a detailed account of the newspapers published in the United States.<sup>13</sup> The figures were astonishing. America was a reading nation. In 1872, in a text on nineteenth-century education, it was pointed out that the annual quantity of paper needed in one American state equaled the needs of both France and England.<sup>14</sup>

In political reviews, articles on the relations of the United States with other countries started appearing. The Old and the New World were compared economically in an article entitled "Europe and America."<sup>15</sup> Curiously enough, the prognostic statement "America has been providing clothing for Europeans, now it can provide their food too," came true in the aftermath of WWII. The facts the author offered in "Europe and America" were impressive and the Bulgarian readers of the Revival Period had no reason to doubt them – one could not publish something that was not true, they believed. Therefore, the conclusion "In a short while America will be able to do without Europe but Europe will not be able to do without America," was a concentrated expression of the impressions Bulgarians had been accumulating for years that America was the land of unlimited possibilities.

One of the tokens of that was, undoubtedly, that railway "from the Earth to the Moon" crossing the Continent all the way from New York to San Francisco. The great distances in America and the American achievements,



economical, technological, educational, social, political, etc. gradually won the sincere admiration of Bulgarians. That was not only due to the contribution of the press publishing reports from America, describing the New York ports and the railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Moreover, the American missionaries that walked up and down the streets of the Ottoman empire, quite a few of them on Bulgarian territory, had brought along their own way of life that moved into their new homes. All that was reflected by the newspapers and journals, and found its way into the homes of Bulgarians. Among their belongings, Bulgarians were to see, for the first time, a rocking chair, a sewing machine, etc.:

No contact with Western Civilization has ever aroused the Oriental from his apathy, but when his heart is warmed into life by Gospel truth, his mind awakens, and he wants a clock, a book, a glass window, and a flour mill. Almost every steamer that leaves New York for the Levant brings sewing machines, watches, carpenter's tools, cabinet organs, or other appliances of Christian civilization in response to native orders that never would have been sent but for the open Bible.(Laurie 424)<sup>16</sup>

In their minds those remained forever associated with America. Therefore, the conviction that Europe could not do without America had its grounds in personal impressions. Furthermore, this belief was backed up by observations on education. American schools and their curricula, as described by European travelers in the States, proved to be more adequate, more progressive, more suitable to the needs of modern times.

Education was a key problem to the Bulgarian Revival Period and an inseparable part of the ideological dispute on the forms of freedom fighting. The supporters of the idea that the only way to achieve freedom was through enlightenment of the masses were backed up by the American example. As the author of 'Public Education in American Schools' put it, it was due to education that American democracy was saved.<sup>17</sup> This was the password that brought American education into the Bulgarian press. The motive behind making the American experience public knowledge was to suggest that education could level us up with the great nations. This was further reinforced in an article entitled 'Public Education in America'.<sup>18</sup> The author quoted H. Webster's opinion that the future destiny of freedom depended on the dissemination of enlightenment among ordinary people. That was the slogan of the evolutionary trend of Bulgarian freedom fighters.

Karavelov was one of the Bulgarians who dedicated a number of articles to educational problems. He admired American pragmatism. He compared the



European and the American systems of education, favoring the American practice-oriented disposition. Knowledge, not as an aim in itself but as the means to attain a goal – this idea was quite familiar to the Bulgarians of the Revival Period. The bourgeois principle was seeded in fertile soil – it was a small step from the concept of education for democracy and freedom to the concept of education for making life easier. That was what made American education preferable to European for Karavelov – it reflected the needs of the new times. Curricula were better motivated. Theory and practice went hand in hand.

In the press of the Bulgarian Revival Period education was a topic closely connected with discussing women's role in society. The translated *History of the United States*, which I have repeatedly mentioned, paid a great deal of attention to the presence of young girls in the teaching profession – typical of America and incredible for Europe. The author pointed out the advantages of having women teachers: on the one hand, their salaries were three times smaller than those of men teachers (which brought in another aspect of inequality); on the other hand, it was generally agreed that, with the same amount of knowledge, women were better than men in teaching children what they knew. Hiring women to teach gave American women in general a higher social status. Strong impressions from school were to account for the inspired deep respect for women in the United States. In addition, women were generally better educated because, unlike men, who set out on a quest of honor from a young age, they were free to develop their minds.<sup>19</sup> Researchers of American feminism could explore the possibility of finding in this direction some answers as to the reasons for the influence of the movement in the United States.

Cimmerman's arguments (quoted by Karavelov<sup>20</sup>) for the equality of boys and girls could be seen as another link between the topics of education and women. Cimmerman was a Russian traveler who wrote a book on what he saw in the United States. He admired the mixed schools in America where boys and girls were taught the same. In Russia (and in all of Europe, in fact) it was believed that certain types of knowledge, like mathematics, were incomprehensible to women. Well, American schools proved that wrong.

The equality of men and women in the States, as far as their education was concerned, might have had its economic reasons in providing lower-paid teachers but for the nineteenth-century Bulgarians that was a huge step forward.

With the Bulgarian background of traditionally patriarchal attitude towards women, the problem of emancipation might seem inadequately introduced but the publications had their role. In the new times Bulgarian



women had to make a choice – they needed to consider the alternatives of civilization and avoid misinterpreting it as following the latest fashion. In the Bulgarian press of the period, American women were opposed to European women. Therefore, Bulgarian women could follow either the American or the West-European model. Their choice was, more or less, prescribed. Karavelov emotionally denounced the European practices:

We would not discuss the education of girls in Europe because this is false to the utmost degree, it is similar to training animals. Teaching girls the French language, the movements of the body called dancing, singing, Chinese discipline, classes in propriety; in our opinion, this is some kind of art rather than education because these do not develop the mind and their effect is evanescent.

He developed this idea further on in his article “On the Education of Women”:

We can see that in most of Europe, following the expectations of society, women’s schools do not educate honest, knowing and useful citizens, they prepare well-trained dolls who learn the ways of keeping their moustache-growing masters satisfied and happy.<sup>21</sup>

Comparing the Bulgarian Revival Period images of Europe and America in greater detail proves the women topic to be just one element in the juxtaposition of Europe and America. It was a juxtaposition of two philosophies of life, of two social and political systems, of two variants of economic organization, even of two religions (Western Europe being primarily Catholic, while, in the States, Protestantism is the domineering form of Christianity). The juxtaposition of values was on all levels because the correctives were different. In America, even equality had an economic background and was pragmatically motivated – men and women had equal rights when they taught but not when they were paid.

Scared of losing its traditional values, Europe was looking for the negative characteristics of America to use them as a shield against the new invasion. The Bulgarian reflection of this process was the translation of two French novels, *Characteristics of the American Way of Life* and *The White Parrot* published together, in one volume, in 1868.<sup>22</sup> Their criticism of America balanced, to some extent, the cult of America created in the Bulgarian press. The ironic attitude towards America and the Americans was expressed in the story, in what the characters said and did, in the narrator’s comments. For example, one of the characters in *Characteristics of the American Way of Life*, a Frenchman, says to another one, a Canadian:



I like you [...], and also because we do not speak that Barbarian language whistling between the teeth of the English and the Americans. (9)

This is the ungrounded emotional negation based on the self-confidence of the French; their pride in their own culture is comparable to that of the ancient Greeks who considered the others Barbarians. This type of nationalism has never been popular among Bulgarians – the geographical situation of our lands, a cross-road on the Balkans, and the multi-ethnic population, have made us tolerant to the others' culture or religion; while the necessity to communicate with foreigners has developed a respectful attitude towards foreign languages and speaking a foreign language has always been most prestigious. On the other hand, the Bulgarian Revival Period was developing the idea that anything could be expressed in the Bulgarian language and there, in the ambition to win recognition for the nation through its language, one could detect a kind of similarity with the French.

A more serious disadvantage of the Americans was their attitude towards the past: "The Americans are only concerned about their present and future, their past – they don't even remember it" (58).

That was only natural because America lacked the traditions and the centuries-old history, which Europe kept looking back to. In Europe, the American attitude was considered strange and incomprehensible. To Bulgarians, it contradicted the ideals of the Revival Period – keeping alive the former greatness of the Bulgarian state was a form of national awakening and seeking recognition.

The novel goes on to discredit the American judicial system. This problem is taken up in *The White Parrot* too, but the focus there is slightly different:

In America, although the jury makes all the decisions, its members are sometimes guided by their conscience, sometimes by money, and sometimes by fear or by the public opinion. (35)

It was mentioned earlier that the greatest number of newspapers were published in the United States and that everybody read them. Nowadays it is not a revelation to say that public opinion is governed by the press. Some hundred years ago, this was still unexplored territory, especially for Bulgarian readers. This is what the novel is about – it tells a story about 'an impartial newspaperman' who sells his conscience and his duty to society for \$ 1,000. The problems of the developed bourgeois societies were still alien to Bulgarians: the press during the Revival Period worked



in the interest of the nation and, though national interests were differently interpreted, to a certain extent, they acted as a barrier against venality and corruption.

In this train of thought, Karavelov's point of view on the negatives of America must have been well understandable to the Bulgarians of the Revival Period. His memoirs *From the Inanimate House*<sup>23</sup> date back to his imprisonment in Budapest and they are a kind of 'digest' of what he read at that time. The prison as an institution is the central topic of this work. Karavelov repeatedly quotes descriptions of American prisons from *Travels in the North-American States, Canada and Cuba*, a book written by a Russian lawyer, A. B. Lackier. Lackier expressed his approval for the innovations in American prisons: the prisoners' right to work, the availability of libraries and the spreading practice to put prisoners into singular cells. In the excerpts cited by Karavelov, we can feel the positive attitude of a lawyer towards the way American institutions work. Karavelov was on the other side of the law – his situation gave him a different perspective in examining the problem and brought him to philosophical reflections on the relativity of 'normal' and 'extraordinary'. He evaluated the 'corrective' role of the American prisons as 'murdering the human spirit' (531–537).

With the exception of prisons, Karavelov's attitude towards American institutions and phenomena was positive. In fact, his works were a great contribution to the spread of American presence in Bulgaria. Due to his writing, John Draper's name and ideas gained popularity among Bulgarians. Draper's parallelism between biological processes and historical development fitted right into our context. The Ottoman Empire, being in the old age, was in the phase of decline, with the prospect of dying. Life was 'opening up' for the young Bulgarian people. What could be a better illustration of its future than the progress of another young nation – the American nation? Thus, when Karavelov rejected the West-European way of life in his articles, he was asserting that the young peoples were much more progressive than the old ones.

Karavelov favored William Carpenter's attitude towards educational emancipation and cited his statement: "If girls do not get the same education boys get, the progress of humanity is endangered."<sup>24</sup> In American schools, boys and girls were not separated.

Karavelov imbibed Draper's attitude towards religion and its institutions and made pathetic use of it in one of his articles. Discussing the harm that



the translations of inappropriate texts could do to the people, he attacked what he called 'literary garbage' and, in particular, what the Protestants wrote, pointing out that the lack of traditions in our literature and science made it quite difficult for Bulgarians to distinguish right from wrong.<sup>25</sup>

Karavelov's utilitarian appropriation of ideas can be best appreciated when tracing how he used Draper's geographical sociology: in his *Stories of Ancient People*,<sup>26</sup> he turned climate and landscape into factors accounting for the spiritual development of the people of India and explaining the accelerated development of the Greeks; still, he did not think of geographical conditions as the reason for the Ottoman yoke because that would mean legitimizing it.

Draper's ideas on historical development were truly representative of nineteenth-century Positivism. At the same time, his criticism of religious obscurantism demonstrated the unlimited belief in reason that was typical of eighteenth-century Enlightenment. This blending of two successive stages in the development of West-European (and American) thinking made Draper's works suitable and expedient for the Bulgarian Revival Period. With his flair for the historical necessity, Karavelov successfully adapted Draper's ideas, offering his reading public a synthesis of the philosophic and aesthetic pursuits of two centuries.

American Protestant missionaries were another important part of the American presence in the Bulgarian Revival Period. They were the people who provided the Ottoman Empire with the first publishing houses. They opened the American College in Istanbul and many Bulgarians had their education there. Writing and translating school books was an essential part of their activities. E. Riggs and C. Morse compiled grammars of the Bulgarian language – written by foreigners and for foreigners.<sup>27</sup> Morse's *An English and Bulgarian Vocabulary in Two Parts: English and Bulgarian and Bulgarian and English* was the first bilingual dictionary of the two languages. Dr. Albert Long wrote a paper on the history of the Slavs and the Bulgarians.<sup>28</sup> He was the one who translated Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into Bulgarian and published it in the Protestant journal, *Zornitsa*.<sup>29</sup> The publications of the missionaries included school books and popular readings in the press. They were the first to provoke some interest in the English language. Their presence was a contribution towards the 'opening' of our society to and for the rest of the world. Still, what they could not achieve were their religious goals. The comment made in 1865 by James Clarke, one of the first Americans to arrive in Bulgaria, is worth citing:



True the desire of the Bulgarians to possess the Sacred Scriptures, so vividly depicted by some of the missionary fathers a few years since, caused many to suppose that the Bulgarians were seeking the religion of the Gospel. We expected this when we came among them, but it has never to any extent, been true. They did and do buy the Scriptures with avidity. Very many are not satisfied if they do not possess every new book that is published among them, and they do have a special reverence though not love for the Sacred Writings. But setting aside these first glowing expectations which never had any good foundation, I think the work here has advanced all that could reasonably be expected considering the amount of labor expended.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the Bulgarians' thirst for knowledge played a bad trick on the American missionaries. The failure of their religious propaganda is another example that the appropriation of influences during the Revival Period was highly selective.

The third aspect of the presence of America in the Bulgarian Revival Period is the translation of American texts into Bulgarian. Here I will offer only a brief account of the American fiction translated into Bulgarian during that period. The first American literary work translated into Bulgarian was published in 1837 and became emblematic of the American presence in the Bulgarian Revival Period. America was introduced to the readers by one of the strongholds of the American Age of Reason. American literature was functionalized here by one of the texts that laid the foundation of American fiction. For Bulgarian literature, this text was among the first literary works introducing the new type of belles-lettres. The two literatures had similar starts, analogies could be sought in the processes of acceleration and compression in their further development. Curiously enough, the American Age of Reason and the Bulgarian Revival Period, the American eighteenth and the Bulgarian nineteenth century, were connected with and dominated by Benjamin Franklin and his introduction to *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 'The Way to Wealth'. Explicitly didactic, reflecting the spirit of its time, this was Franklin's most popular text – by the end of the nineteenth century it had more than 200 editions. This text was translated and published more than any other text in the Revival Period.<sup>31</sup> Excerpts of Franklin's *Autobiography* also found their way into the Bulgarian language. Most often texts were accompanied by editor's or translator's notes on the author. Thus, Franklin was among the most popular foreigners for the Bulgarians from the Revival Period.<sup>32</sup>



Washington Irving and James F. Cooper were the American Romantics represented in the Bulgarian Revival Period. In 1859, an excerpt entitled 'A Man from the Woods' was published in a literary journal.<sup>33</sup> The story tells the readers about the intrigues and the deceit in the Spanish court and paints grand pictures of nature. It was planned as a series of installments but, after the first part, no continuation followed. Cooper's name was mentioned as the author of the text, though no reference was made as to which novel it was taken from.

In 1875 a Washington Irving's story appeared in Bulgarian with the title 'Being a Woman, or the True Wife'.<sup>34</sup> The beginning is explicitly journalistic in style, disclosing woman's nature: no matter how fragile and frivolous she might be under normal circumstances, when misfortune befalls, she becomes her husband's support and comfort. Apart from leading into the story, in the Bulgarian context of the Revival Period, this declaration connected the text to the women topic discussed in the press. Considering the vivid language and imagery of the translation and the fact that Petko Gorbanov had studied at Robert College, it is very likely that he translated the story from the original.

Edgar Allan Poe was another American writer known to the Bulgarian readers of the Revival Period. In 1856, his tale 'The Facts in the Case of Mr. Valdemar' was translated into Bulgarian by T. Shishkov from a translation in the *Bosphorus Telegraph*.<sup>35</sup> It is one of Poe's stories about supernatural forces and occult fantasies. The original text easily divides into two parts: an introduction, creating the atmosphere of mystery and wonder, and the narration, which gives a detailed account of a mesmeric experiment. The translator, either a Bulgarian or a Turk, chose to translate only the narrative part. The dying Mr. Valdemar is mesmerized. After a conversation with him, under hypnosis, he is announced dead. He has spent 7 months in this state between life and death when the people carrying out the experiment try to bring him back. Not only does this attempt turn out to be unsuccessful, it is terrifying – the body melts down to a pile of mortal remains before their very eyes. Some of the details appear changed in the Bulgarian translation but that does not affect the meaning. The first person narrative of the original is preserved, a technique reinforcing the contrast between the incredible, the inexplicable, the mysterious, and the existing witness who tells the story. The translator's choice of this text was not politically motivated as in most of the other cases. People of all times have been interested in mysterious and frightening stories. Such stories, real or fictional, were told at night at gatherings around the fire. With the



urbanization of life, people were deprived of collective folklore experiences of this kind. Therefore, one of the very first functions of the press was to provide a substitute for folklore communication.

By contrast, the reasons for publishing 'A Conversation with a Mummy' were completely different.<sup>36</sup> I. Geshov creatively used the text of one of Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* to write a satire on Bulgarian social and political life. The center of the story is a conversation between two intellectuals (a doctor and his friend) and the Egyptian mummy they have brought back to life. This provides a dislocated point of view towards Bulgarian reality. What they are discussing is the latest historical event – the restored independence of the Bulgarian church. The three characters talk about the Bulgarian clergy and their training, about bringing up children and their education, about the press and its influence on society. The mummy is consistent and impartial in his arguments. This makes the other two wonder if it would not be a good idea to have the leaders and intellectuals mummified for a couple of years if only their reasoning would improve.

This satire is one of the best of its time. It uses the narrative frame of Poe's tale and discusses local problems. The narrator is in a direct dialogue with the reader from the very beginning. While explaining the doctor's intentions to wake up the mummy with an electric arc shock, he addresses his audience with the advice – if there are readers who have never heard of an voltaic arc or galvanic electricity, it is high time for them to find out what these mean – there are three or four physics books published in Bulgarian.

Geshov made the story topical and up-to-date and, in addition to being sarcastic, he was also concerned and helpful, offering his advice. He managed to subordinate Poe's originality to his purpose: to enlighten the masses and reform the weaknesses by means of literature. He succeeded in utilizing one more grain of American literature for the needs of the Bulgarian people.

In 1858 an incomplete *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published, translated by D. Mutev.<sup>37</sup> Apart from the separate edition of 62 pages, continuations could be found in one of the influential literary journals of the period.<sup>38</sup>

In a similar manner, the American original was published in installments (in the *National Era* journal, in 1851–2). The peculiarity of the reception of H. B. Stowe's novel is in its immediacy. Undoubtedly, the reasons for the translation were political rather than literary, although *Uncle Tom's Cabin* turned into the first American bestseller abroad, translated into more than 30 languages. As the intentions of the author were allegedly



to make the American people feel how ignominious slavery was, similarly, D. Mutev expressed his sympathy for the plight of his fellow countrymen by translating the book into Bulgarian. The unhappy lot of the oppressed was a problem of the present day for Bulgarians. What was translated into Bulgarian were the first eight and a half chapters, ending with the escape of the mother whose six-year-old son was sold. Taking away a child from his mother was painfully familiar to the Bulgarian readers. The vague hints, which remained unexplained because the rest of the novel was missing, provoked their imagination. Readers must have reconstructed the missing information using their knowledge of similar stories, most probably local and real-life. As for the part not translated, identification with the characters would have been more difficult – the rest of the novel deals with the lives of the slaves in the plantations in the South, the blacks escaping to Canada, the lives of the whites in the aristocratic South, and those were problems remote from the Bulgarian reality.

A comparison with two later translations, Govedarov's from 1898 and Anna Kamenova's, proves Mutev's translation much better than Govedarov's and very close to Kamenova's. In V. Trendafilov's opinion,<sup>39</sup> Mutev mystified the source of his translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Both Mutev and Kamenova stated to have translated from the English language. What is more, both translations have identical abridgements of the original text, which means that, most probably, they used the same abridged source. In addition, they both studied in England and were known to be proficient in English. Mutev was a collector of Bulgarian sayings – they must have helped him a lot in finding phrasal equivalents for what he translated. What hinders reading is not the quality of his translation but the graphic design – characters' speech, for example, is sometimes punctuated with quotation marks, sometimes with dashes, and sometimes not at all. The translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1858 was adequate to the Bulgarian political needs as well as to our literary development. The first original novelettes in Bulgarian literature appeared at about that time, interweaving sentimentality and adventures in the same manner.

To summarize, America became a synonym for freedom and democracy, good education, emancipation of women, progress and modernity. European versus American was established as an opposition. The American literary presence, as well as the presence of the American missionaries, backed up and enriched the images of America created in the press. The appropriation of these sides of what America offered reveals



the active role of the recipient, that is the Bulgarian culture of the Revival Period, and the inadequacy of searching for American influence at that time. The criteria for constructing these images and translating these texts were mostly social and political: their topics and ideas were the leading factors in choosing what was to be translated. American literature, unlike other literatures present in the cultural continuum of the Bulgarian Revival Period, did not influence the development of genres in Bulgarian literature, neither its aesthetics or poetics. Still, the American presence was an essential part of the spectrum of foreign cultural presence in the Bulgarian Revival Period. It could be interpreted as a mini-model of the pragmatic attitude of the intellectuals of the period towards the achievements the outer world could offer. Their decisions, concerning cultural import, reflect their hierarchy of priorities. Analyzing the American presence will add to our understanding of the period. What is more, it might help us explain some contemporary phenomena because that presence has constructed concepts and images that are alive and thriving even today.



## NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> In the vocabulary of the Bulgarian Revival Period, America is synonymous to the United States of America, so whenever we use America and American here it will be with that connotation.
- <sup>2</sup> Михайловски, 1868.
- <sup>3</sup> All translations mine unless otherwise indicated.
- <sup>4</sup> Лабуле, 1872: 16–24.
- <sup>5</sup> Каравелов, 1873; Каравелов, 1874.
- <sup>6</sup> Каравелов, 1875a. The name of the author of *Franklin's Life* was reconstructed on the basis of its spelling in Cyrillic letters.
- <sup>7</sup> Левертюр, 1873. The name of the character was reconstructed on the basis of its spelling in Cyrillic letters.
- <sup>8</sup> Македония, II, № 51, 18 ноем. 1868.
- <sup>9</sup> Пчелица, I, 1871, № 3, с. 39, 60.
- <sup>10</sup> Каравелов, 1875a.
- <sup>11</sup> Каравелов, 1871.
- <sup>12</sup> Бълг. книжици, I, 1858, № 3–5, с. 75, 125, 145.
- <sup>13</sup> Кръстевич, 1859.
- <sup>14</sup> Лавеле 910.
- <sup>15</sup> Симонин, 1877.
- <sup>16</sup> Cited from: Clarke 314.
- <sup>17</sup> Лавеле 906, 951, 999, 1048.
- <sup>18</sup> Хипо, 1871.
- <sup>19</sup> Compare: Лабуле 957.
- <sup>20</sup> Каравелов, 1875a.
- <sup>21</sup> Каравелов, 1876.
- <sup>22</sup> Михайловски, 1868.
- <sup>23</sup> Каравелов, 1984–1992, т. 4.
- <sup>24</sup> Каравелов, 1984–1992, т. 10, с. 355.
- <sup>25</sup> See Каравелов, 1984–1992, т. 6, с. 160.
- <sup>26</sup> Каравелов, Л. Разкази за старовремски хора.  
Compare: Каравелов, т. 12, 1984–1992, с. 223, 281.
- <sup>27</sup> Riggs, 1843; Morse, 1859.
- <sup>28</sup> Лонг, 1870.
- <sup>29</sup> Бъниан, 1866.
- <sup>30</sup> Cited from: Clarke, 1988.
- <sup>31</sup> More on Franklin's reception in Bulgaria: Апетов, 1990.
- <sup>32</sup> Listed here are the texts of the Bulgarian Revival Period associated with Franklin's name:  
Франклин, Б. Мудрост доброго Рихарда (от французиат на словеноболгарският наш язык преведена от Гавриила Крестовича, котлянца, настоянием же и иждивлением Райна Поповича Ж. на свет издано). Издание первое. (Richards Geschichte) – в Будиме градер писмени Крал. все училища Вениркс, 1837. [Отвѣн:] Мудрост доброго Рихарда и Митос Продиков, 64, църк.-слав. букви; Богато художество (преведе сначала от френский, а сега от греческий [от К. Фотинов] ). – Любословие, 1846, № 13 и 15; Изкуство да стане человек богат (прев. от нем. Н. Първанов). – Македония, II, № 21 и 22, 20 и 27 апр. 1868;



Сиромах Богдан или способ за обогатяване. Книжка много поучителна за народът [от В. Франклин, превел и преработил П. Р. Славейков?]. Цариград, в печатницата на в. „Македония“, 1869; Способ за обогатяване – същият текст и на стр. на в. „Македония“, III, № 28–29, 1869; Пътът към обогатяването или науката на Добрий Рихарда 1757 [от Франклин]. Превод от фр. [на Л. Йовчев]. – Читалище, II, 1 апр. 1872, № 13, с. 586; Мъдри изречения. – Летоструй, III, 1871, с. 196; Наведися. – Другар за децата, Одеса, 1863; Детство Вениамина Франклина. – Другар за децата, Одеса, 1863; Понаведи ся. Понаведи! – В: Бисер и безценни камъни за украшаване на душите и сърцата на децата. Съст. Д. Т. Душанов, 1869; Свирката. – В: Бисер и безценни камъни за украшаване на душите и сърцата на децата. Съст. Д. Т. Душанов, 1869; Пищялката (прев. Л. Йовчев). – Читалище, I, 1871, № 21, с. 670.

<sup>33</sup> Купър, 1859: 52, 87.

<sup>34</sup> Ървинг, 1876.

<sup>35</sup> По, 1856.

<sup>36</sup> Гешов 671.

<sup>37</sup> Стоу, 1858.

<sup>38</sup> Български книжици, II, ч. I, № 4, 63–70; № 7, 71–78; ч. II, № 14, 79–86.

<sup>39</sup> Трендафилов 130.

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*Bulgarski Knizhitsi*  
and the First Translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

The first available translation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Bulgaria seems to have been the Russian one of 1857, which was available in Bulgarian libraries the same year it was published. Dimitar Mutev's unfinished translation, purporting to be from the original and published in the first volume of the journal *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* (1858), brought the Bulgarian version to readers of the times. It was soon followed by a separate book edition (Constantinople, 1858). Mutev's journal serial and book edition cover the first eight chapters of the novel or the section ending with Eliza's escape over the frozen Ohio River (with an additional two extra chapters published in the second volume of *Bulgarski Knizhitsi*). References in the press point to the existence of a second, full translation of the novel from a French version by Todor Shishkov in 1873. Unfortunately, this second translation, made by a man who was both a major translator and one of the first literary critics of the times, seems to have existed only in manuscript form and cannot be located,<sup>1</sup> leaving Mutev's text as the only source for the pre-1878 period. These first translations were followed up beyond the National Revival Period by an adapted translation by M. Moskov for children in 1897 (dated on the basis of its foreword, but currently available only in its second edition of 1902) and the full translation of I. Govedarov in 1898.

Although the historical facts are well known and documented, it is important to view the appearance of Mutev's 1858 translation (and the journal *Bulgarski Knizhitsi*) briefly against the background of at least a few of the key events of that particular year and the overall period. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first translated two years after the finish of the Crimean War, eighteen years before the April Uprising against the Ottoman Empire and exactly two decades before independence was achieved in the Russian – Turkish War of 1877–78. There had already been numerous revolts in the previous years and in 1858 Georgi Rakovski began drawing up an initial plan for



forthcoming Insurrection, although the greater part of his generation continued to stress enlightenment, rather than insurrection as the necessary first stage in the move towards independence. Two years earlier, the Islahat Ferman (Reform Charter), an expanded version of the Tanzimat Edict of 1839, had raised hopes in the Ottoman Empire subjects for modernization in the spheres of individual citizen rights, educational and church structures, and local administration. 1858 also brought the Introduction of the Land Code into the Ottoman Empire. Although this law reasserted the state title to lands which qualified as such, and claimed taxes from land tenants, it marked a shift towards modernization in the sphere of land ownership:

The effect of the law was to transform the traditional form of state ownership into a modern concept of public ownership. The code was generally liberalized so that state lands could be transferred and mortgaged to the extent that in practice they came to resemble private property (Karpat 94)

The year 1858 is also a pivotal one in regard to Bulgarian church history. In October the Patriarchal Synod convened in Istanbul with only three Bulgarian representatives present. Their moderate proposals for church reform were turned down. This event precipitated a controversy and struggle lasting over a decade which was to culminate in the legal recognition of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870. As will be seen, these particular events were to have a profound effect on the founding of the Journal *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* and the goals it stood for. The church became a national institution which was to play a powerful political role in the country's move towards independence and future development.

The year 1858 marks another beginning of sorts. The translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came at a time when the American cultural and ideological presence was first becoming felt in Bulgaria. This presence was to make a political impact during the April Uprising when reports of Turkish atrocities made to the American and European community by the American diplomat Eugene Schuyler and the journalist MacGahan played an important role in Bulgarian history. But missionary presence dates to an earlier period – American missionaries first came to the Ottoman Empire in 1819.<sup>2</sup> While there was an active interest in the Bulgarians on the part of British missionaries from the twenties on, the first American missionaries toured Bulgarian lands in 1834 and soon reached conclusions on the necessity of initiating missionary activity there. The first missionary station in the region was established in Adrianople in 1858, the financial difficulties of the



“Bulgarian” project having previously led to a decision to divide the spheres of influence between the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Methodist Episcopal Church, working respectively in the regions south and north of the Balkan range. While the American missionaries were active in various fields, two directions their efforts took merit particular attention here. One relates to their participation in the educational reform movement already under way in Bulgaria throughout the whole National Revival Period. The first Bulgarian secular school had been established in Gabrovo in 1835,<sup>3</sup> marking a major shift towards modernization in the function and content of the educational system. The missionaries founded their own schools for boys in Philipopolis in 1860 and Eski Zagra in 1870 and for girls in 1863 in Eski Zagra; both schools were subsequently moved to Samokov. Transformed into high schools, the Samokov schools continued to function into the twentieth century as important educational centers. Cyrus Hamlin, one of the most active missionaries of the America Board, founded Robert College in Constantinople in 1863. This educational institution was to play a significant role in the lives of several generations of Bulgarian political and cultural figures in the period pending the country’s liberation and well into the twentieth century. As historians have noted, although the importance of the missionaries waned as the movement for establishing a national church picked up momentum, missionary schools served as cultural bridges for introducing American educational and cultural models into the country,<sup>4</sup> although the extent and implications of this cultural influence are still a controversial issue.

Another important direction which American missionary activity took was in the sphere of literature and publishing. American missionary publishing activity was centered in Constantinople until 1898, when it was moved to Samokov, and it played an important role not only for the introduction of missionary literature, but, in certain cases, for the spread of Bulgarian books as well. One of the first examples of American missionary activity was the publication in, 1856 of the Bulgarian text of the New Testament (a translation project which brought together the efforts of the American Board and such literary figures of the period as Petko Slaveikov). This was followed by a considerable body of translated literature during this period relating primarily to didactic and moral issues, but also devoted to the introduction of textbooks, many written by the missionaries themselves. According to some sources, the very first introduction of Benjamin Franklin and American literature into Bulgaria through “The Wisdom of Good



Richard" (translated by Gavril Krustevich in 1837) may have been connected to the work of the Missionary Board in Constantinople.<sup>5</sup> As studies have shown, missionary pamphlets, tracts and textbooks did find a Bulgarian readership, although this fact is due more to the search for cultural information, rather than to the spread of Protestant ideas.<sup>6</sup> The popularity of missionary literature would have made texts such as Stowe's novel, with its grounding in Protestant religious norms and rhetoric, all the more accessible to Bulgarian readers. One of the most interesting sidelights of American missionary publishing activity is the founding of *Zornitsa*, a periodical that served as an important conduit for American cultural and ideological models from the early 1860s onward. Because of their significance as primary sources on American civilization and the interest they present as background material for the spread of ideas and models contained in works such as Stowe's novel, the magazine and the subsequent newspaper *Zornitsa* are of real interest to researchers.

While it is impossible to do any justice here to the major events of this period, it is interesting to note one minor fact which links Stowe's vision of Europe, as embodied in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with events transpiring in Bulgarian lands at that time. As critics have pointed out,<sup>7</sup> Stowe, along with many of her contemporaries, drew inspiration from the European revolutions of 1848. It was Lajos Kossuth, who had arrived for a tour of the United States in December 1851, at the time when the last chapters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were being published in the *National Era*, that captured her imagination. There are important references to Hungarian revolutionaries in the novel, as well as attempts to introduce analogies between the European situation and antislavery events transpiring in the United States. In 1849, finding asylum in the Ottoman Empire, Kossuth had crossed the Danube with some of the Polish generals and several thousand of his followers. They were to spend over a year in Shoumen before encountering difficulties with the Turkish authorities which caused most of them to leave the Ottoman Empire and Kossuth himself to depart for the United States. Without drawing any direct link between this historical fact and the publication of Stowe's novel, it must be pointed out that this brief stay in Bulgaria provided, according to some historians, one tributary to the development of the whole National Revival movement, helping to create an environment in which Stowe's work became the first American novel to be translated.

It is against this background – marked by the emergence of new socio-political, economic, cultural and ideological structures, preparing the country



for independence and its future status as a modern European nation-state, and, importantly for this paper, the initial stages of familiarization with American culture – that the first translation and publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* must be viewed.

The philological journal *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* /povremenno spisanie na Bulgarskata knizhnina/ was a major cultural and literary undertaking of the period. Apart from being the first translator of Stowe, Dimiter Mutev also became the founding editor of this journal in 1858. Although ill health forced him to leave a year later, *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* continued publication for four years, making important contributions to the development of Bulgarian culture under the later editorships of Ivan Bogorov (second translator of the adapted *The Wonders of Robinson Crusoe*), Gavril Krustevich (the first translator of Benjamin Franklin), Todor Burmov and Sava Filaretov.

The development of Dimiter Mutev, the first major scientist of the National Revival, the founding editor of one of the first culture-oriented journals and the first translator of a major American novel, represents a quintessential National Revival life story.<sup>8</sup> Born in 1818 into a Kalofer family which produced several major literary figures, his lifetime spans what can best be described as two distinct cultural generations of National Revival figures. On the one hand, he belonged to the generation emerging in the late thirties and forties, who received their education abroad, very often in Russia and particularly Odessa, some also having the chance to study in Western European countries – a fact which would explain the widespread introduction of western cultural models during the forties.<sup>9</sup> In terms of their literary interests, these were figures interested in translation and its functions in the emerging modern national cultural context. Mutev also belonged to the new generation of the fifties and sixties. It was the writers and translators of this period, whose main representative is considered to be Petko Slaveikov, who began actual literary experimentation and the creation of original Bulgarian works of literature. In this respect, *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* was from its very inception a journal at a literary crossroads, featuring major samples of translation, but also Bulgarian adaptations of outside literary texts and first samples of original Bulgarian literary creativity.

In general Mutev's lifetime spanned a period of cultural development characterized by Enlightenment ideals, pedagogical and philological interests and an encyclopedic approach to knowledge. The major cultural and ideological concerns of the times, in addition to the all-embracing goal of achieving national independence, included the introduction of a sweeping



educational reform movement which reflected a new, secular and western/European mind-set, the further shaping of a sense of national identity through the choice, development and expansion of a Bulgarian literary language, the exploration and preservation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage and its situating within wider cultural (most often Slavic) parameters, and the waging of a church reform movement to escape the domination of the Greek church. There was yet another issue which was beginning to take shape and would become an important one in the following decades – gradually changing gender relations and a growing concern with the “woman’s question” as an outgrowth of educational reform, the move to abolish slavery and its concomitant psychological factors, and the country’s movement towards a capitalist economy.

The major intellectual figures of the times were generally divided between “educational” and “revolutionary” methods as the best means of achieving independence. This is a well documented chapter of Bulgarian history and hardly needs additional commentary in this paper. It must be pointed out, however, that the goals followed by the supporters of the educational model coincided to a considerable degree with the antebellum views of Stowe and many of her generation on the most successful ways to resolve the issue of slavery without leading the country into a deadly civil war. In this connection, it is interesting to quote two passages from Petko Slaveikov, one of the principle defenders of the Enlightenment position, for the analogies they contain to similar ideas that emerged two decades earlier in the American context:

The unenlightened is a slave, wherever he may be; even if he lives in the freest of countries, he is still a slave – a slave to the cruelest tormentors of man, a slave to his own passions and a slave to his own and others’ prejudices. A general national consciousness and enlightenment are the true source of freedom – without being free in himself, a man cannot be outwardly free. [...] ‘To arms, to arms’ – such is the cry, we are told, of fiery patriots who feel their beloved native country is in a critical plight, ‘Books, books!’ – this is and should be the cry of the supporters of the enlightenment from all around our homeland; a sweet and comforting voice for a people so quietly and legally achieving its social regeneration through science. (Quoted in ПЕНЕВ, т. IV: 184)

Considering the strong and active interests of the Beecher family in educational reform and Stowe’s own position on enlightenment as the major prerequisite for freedom, these are sentiments which the American writer



would have strongly supported. While education is raised to the level of a panacea for all social ills in Stowe's second anti-slavery novel *Dred* (where insurrectionary means for the abolition of slavery are symbolically rejected in favor of spiritual and educational uplifting), the idea that enlightenment must precede and underlie political freedom is already evident in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. There is evidence that Mutev, as part of the group of Bulgarian intellectuals concentrated in Istanbul where these ideas were prevalent, also supported the enlightenment model.<sup>10</sup> Like most of his generation (similarly to Stowe's own generation), Mutev was a man deeply committed to educational reform, as revealed by the period he spent as Head of the Bolgrad High school at the end of his life. In any case, the enlightenment ideals evident in Stowe's novel would have been in concordance with the views held by Mutev and many of his generation.<sup>11</sup> This point will be further explored in this essay.

Without drawing farfetched direct parallels between the American and Bulgarian cultural backgrounds, it can be pointed out that the closest analogy in the American context to Mutev's cultural environment can be found in the emphasis on nativism in the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century. There was in Bulgaria at this time, according to the literary critic D. Lekov, a need to define the term "Bulgarian" according to its ethnic, religious, historical, social and psychological parameters. In the words of Bogorov, the second editor of *Bulgarski Knizhitsi*, "we have to first create Bulgarians and then Bulgaria."<sup>12</sup> The site taken up by a major journal such as *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* in the process of defining "Bulgarians" and "Bulgaria" must be considered in some detail. In this respect, the "cultural work" that the translator of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* wanted it to perform in the Bulgarian environment can be better understood if the selection of this text is considered as the result of editorial policy and the novel itself is viewed as part of a whole complex of foreign translated materials entering the country through this journal.

*Bulgarski Knizhitsi* was the periodical organ of the "Community of Bulgarian Letters" [Obsbtina na bulgarskata knizhnina] in Istanbul. The goals *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* defended fully answered the needs of the times and are particularly connected with the struggle over church reform:

The aim [of the journal] must in general be concentrated on the education of our compatriots [...], on our survival and excelling, on our language and nationality and our invaluable binding (dragozenushago styazheniya) to the Orthodox Christian faith.<sup>13</sup>



This was in line with the concrete aims of the “Community of Bulgarian Letters.” They were basically two: 1. to make the necessary books in Bulgarian (both original and translated) available to Bulgarian schools and churches at accessible prices, thus helping to break the spiritual hold Ottoman and Greek influence had in the country through state power and the church and 2. to bring together “the national Bulgarian language and the thoughts of scholars on how it should be written” so that these two factors could combine to create a model for further language development (“водачи на онези, дето пишат български”).<sup>14</sup> The two major translated Western texts of fiction included in the 1858 volume of *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* were Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* and Stowe’s novel (there was another short American text included in this volume, “The Man of the Forest” translated by Grueff and purportedly written by Fenimore Cooper). In the light of the Community’s stated interests the selection of these particular two works must have been due not only to the desire to represent the newest developments in European and American literature, but also to the Christian value system they both strongly embody. What is more, both tackle a similar theme – the need to reinvest public life with Christian principles. Interestingly both works approach the Christianization of public life (both the market and the political system) from the perspective of a much-needed Christian change of heart(h) – through the trope of realigned family life and domestic space .

A scientist in his own right, Mutev hoped to bring a scientific approach to bear on the concerns of the journal – an approach that would be evident both in the wide range of historical, economic, social and philological materials selected and in the ways they were presented. “After God’s word,” he wrote in one of the introductory essays to the journal, “we accord the second place in importance to science and hope that we won’t be left without contributors in this field [...] But lest the reader imagine that this part will be solely aimed towards scholars, we dare assure him that it will be ordered in such a way so as to be comprehensible for all.”<sup>15</sup>

The enterprise of language- and culture-building was served in the 1858 volume through a variety of articles and monographs, most often dealing with Bulgarian history, church history, language, and Slavic studies. There are also several collections of folklore materials, included with the specified aim of preserving the national cultural heritage for posterity. As the examination of these materials would take this study far afield, I will limit myself to the observation that these served not only to locate Bulgaria in a wide cultural “present,” but also to familiarize the reader with a sense of shared traditions and a usable cultural past.



While the journal's Bulgarian pieces fostered a sense of unified community, the choice of translated materials emphasized the other side of National Revival concerns – the interest in outside cultural models. Along with its literary translations, *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* of 1858 offered a wide range of information on places and events outside the Ottoman Empire, several of which merit at least brief attention here as illustrations in different fields of a developing interest in western information sources and cultural models. In this connection, the fact that both Dickens and Stowe were translated from the English language makes an important point. In a culture where language was a source of national unification, the status of other languages became equally important as a means of expressing alien cultures. This concept which shapes a common theme in the national press of the time is outlined in a series of articles by the linguist Nikola Kasapskii in *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* of 1858. Written on the theme of the Bulgarian language, these pieces are interspersed with typical for the times views on Bulgaria's relationship to foreign languages and cultures:

In order to become a knowledgeable people, worthy of posts in the city, and good merchants, Bulgarians must inevitably know four languages: Bulgarian, Turkish, French and Greek. They will use the first language in their relations with each other, the second with state power, the third with the world, and the fourth language will be used between the great merchants, so that they don't waste their valuable time.<sup>16</sup>

Kasapskii's view of the English language offers a direct comment on the cultures of English-speaking peoples:

The English language is capable of "high" poetry, of powerful eloquence in matters relating to the sphere of public activity. Shakespeare and Milton, Pitt and Canning, Rothschild and Baring all used the language with different degrees of mastery and success. English grammar is the most concrete and logical.<sup>17</sup>

The notion of the English language as connected to the discourses of "high" literature, finances, diplomacy, administration and, generally, public affairs in a sense prepares the ground for the information and cultural work that English language texts are expected to bring to the Bulgarian context. Thus, the journal includes detailed articles discussing English political structures and statesmen, the banking system of the west,<sup>18</sup> as well as socio-historical studies of Kansas and Liberia, and other similar pieces.



In view of the text selection of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for translation and Mutev's own interest in educational reform, it is important to mention some of the materials included on education and child upbringing. It is noteworthy that the English-language-based pieces on this subject included in the journal reflect the change of values Stowe's work so forcefully embodied in the American environment. In a recent cultural study of the antebellum 1840s and 50s, Richard Brodhead makes the point that this period witnessed the retreat from corporal punishment in the United States as an educational correctional method and the move towards a new disciplinary order based on correction-by-interiorization of authority figures, or what the critic refers to as "discipline through love."<sup>19</sup> This change, which Brodhead calls a "culture-specific historical formation" is connected with the retreat from the slavery system and its psychological implications, the lash or corporal punishment being a central symbol in the culture of the practices and the whole structure of relations connected with slavery. The shift in values is also connected with the rise of new social formations, including the emphasis on domestic ideology and the growing role of the middle-class family, and the appearance of new educational institutions (the public school), among other factors. Without eliminating subjugation, it was to lead to major changes in power structures at all levels of American society. Stressing the fact that the novel took on the functions of a key disciplinary institution in the nineteenth century, Brodhead points to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as "the great literary version of the antebellum meditation on corporal correction" (83).

The American corporal debate of the antebellum period appears on the pages of the 1858 volume of *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* on several occasions. One piece, aptly entitled "Should Children Be Beaten in the Presence of Their Peers," is a translation by Grueff from an original English-language article. While it was not standard practice to provide information on source texts and the author is unfortunately unspecified, this is most probably a translation of an American text, as it reflects some of the key cultural issues of the nineteenth century antebellum intellectual background. Taking a stand against the use of corporal correction in children's upbringing and education, the author develops the argument that the sense of morality comes from inward impulses, and not the external fear of objects which inflict bodily pain. The article makes a direct connection between the rejection of a slave mentality and the shift away from corporal punishment in children's education: "Should we teach our conscience, that free feeling of man from his earliest years, to feel dependence on bodily sensations or even on spiritual sensations that still make him feel dependent!"<sup>20</sup>



The same issue is introduced in a second article which provides a detailed description of a successful educational experiment carried out by a Dr. Stowe in Germany. According to Mutev, the possible translator of the piece, this institution rejects corporal and other severe types of punishment for students. Providing an illustration of the concept "discipline through love," the author points out that corporal correction has been replaced with the idea that "the best way to elicit [obedience] is through the friendly relations between the children and the teacher."<sup>21</sup> It is very probable that Mutev misunderstood the authorship of the piece and that Dr. Stowe was its actual writer, rather than a German educator. In fact, because of its content, there is good reason to believe that the article offered to Bulgarian readers is actually based on the report on Prussian schools made by Dr. Calvin Stowe, the husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe.<sup>22</sup> Calvin Stowe had been appointed by the Ohio legislature to travel to Europe in 1836 and observe the Prussian public school system and its reformist methods. His "Report on Elementary Instruction in Europe," based on this trip, was widely read throughout the United States and had an influence on common school education. Many of the liberal reform concepts popularized at this time were later taken up by Horace Mann in the development of the public school system and found their literary representation as a psychological-cultural construct of the period in works such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

While Stowe's novel first entered the Bulgarian context with other compatible non-literary materials, it must be emphasized again that these texts were selected for and adapted to the needs of Bulgarian culture and they found their place in the types of Bulgarian national discourses developing at mid-nineteenth century. It is possible to establish a connection between the goals of the Bulgarian educational reform movement and the ideas motivating parallel reforms in the United States. The concept of "slavery" meant very different things in the two cultures, but it is typical of both that the spread and modernization of education was seen as a key to eliminating subjugation as a social reality and a state of mind.

The concept of using English texts as sources of literary models also explains the place of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *Bulgarski Knizhitsi*. While Stowe's bestseller did not, as far as I know, inspire the creation of any particular Bulgarian work of fiction, it was one of the translations which served to further expand the possibilities of the sentimental mode. By the 1840's Bulgarian society, undergoing the breakdown of the traditional ties between the individual and the community, was moving into a literary decade in



which this mode would become prominent. Strains of the sentimental are already evident in the short fictional pieces published in the press during the 40s. The strong influence of sentimental and melodramatic techniques can be found in the first original works of Bulgarian literature such as “Neshtastna Familia,” published by *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* in 1860. While no direct connection can be proven between these two texts, it should be noted that, similarly to Stowe’s approach, this first Bulgarian narrative also organized its depiction of national subjugation around the central trope of the broken family, as its very title makes clear. And, perhaps, the question of literary models is also indirectly connected to the fact that the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the first work by a woman novelist<sup>23</sup> to be translated into the culture, is paralleled by the appearance of the first original literary works by a Bulgarian woman in the same volume. These were the two pieces of poetry “God” and “A Fable” which, not surprisingly, belonged to the sister of Stowe’s translator, Elena Muteva (1824–1854), a highly talented poet and translator in her own right. Stowe’s relationship to the sentimental mode developing in Bulgarian literature and to the gender issue deserves greater attention than the present essay allows.

The selection of the materials dealt with so far has been explained on the level of their adaptability and relevance to Bulgarian needs of the times. Following this line of reasoning, it is important to explore *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a translation, that is, as a text which has been “rewritten,” adapted and revised in a foreign language to fit the requirements of a target culture at a particular historical moment. The following analysis will not deal so much with the evaluation of lexical and grammatical equivalence, as with the deeper problems the translator may have faced in rendering culture-based, economic and socio-political levels of meaning.

Even a cursory comparison of Mutev’s translation with the 1898 full version of Govedarov, which was probably based on a translation, would show that the latter text is the inferior one in terms of accuracy and deleted material. To provide one glaring example, Govedarov completely misconstrues Stowe’s thesis by transforming his Uncle Tom into a mulatto character. While there are numerous cases of lexical errors, misunderstood idioms and missing clauses in Mutev’s text, this early translation seems to have been based, as the translator claims, on the original English narrative and is closely patterned on it, following its word order and exemplifying a close reading and interpretation of various dialect and cultural specificities. The general accuracy of the definitions, and even more, the relatively correct



rendition of the difficult Black dialect forms (in Stowe's version of them) may indicate that the translator could have had an American as a consultant, especially as Constantinople was becoming the center of American missionary activity. This is substantiated by the fact that there are several references in the Bulgarian text to missionary meetings (to render the difficult, American-culture based concept "camp meeting"). Judging by the transcription of some names – Garris for Harris, etc. – Mutev also apparently had recourse to the recent Russian translation.

Mutev's approach to translation is in line with the goals of language expansion and information-flow followed by the journal. In an age when footnoting was rarely employed (Mutev makes very sparing use of it for the term "gentleman"), the text sometimes directly incorporates terminological definitions by means of brackets. These include cultural and historical concepts which would have been unclear to Bulgarian readers such as "mulatto" (12)<sup>24</sup>, "to sell down the river" (19) and "abolitionist" (35). The definitions are brief and sparse on details, as in: "abolitionists" (those who want to free the slaves). Some explanations are introduced in order to render dialect forms more closely to the original, as in the case of "Mas'r Lincoln" (as well as "Missis" and "Miss") which are transcribed accordingly and then explained. In certain cases, the translator introduces what may be coined, recent or nonstandard Bulgarian terms and explains these with more established terminology in brackets as in: "bankruptcy" (21) – изпаданение (фалименто) (9); "portrait" (35–36) – портрет (живописно изображение) (22); "bench" (ibid) – дървяна лавка (скемля); baker (37) – пекар (фурнаджия).

There are, of course, completely misunderstood (or unexplainable in terms of a Bulgarian reading audience) culture-based concepts. Log cabins (21), for instance, are turned into sheds – кошара. As mentioned earlier, however, the text is generally accurate in terms of specific items. Even dialect-based idioms which would have proven difficult for a contemporary translator are rendered in culturally equivalent Bulgarian idioms. To provide a few illustrations, the regional "You'd make a hornbug laugh" is rendered into the Bulgarian "you'd make the dead laugh" (28) and the description of Haley as "a very old bird, and naturally inclined to be suspicious of chaff" is fittingly transformed into "Haley [...] who was an old fox and by nature very suspicious" (58). The difficult Black English "proud as Cuffee" is aptly transformed into "голям като везир." The idiomatic "narrow escape" (51) is translated as "to hang by a thread" (висяха на влакно) (36). There are



even cases of original, poetic translation: the English “a heavy cloud settled over [Aunt Chloe’s] face” (58) is transformed into the Bulgarian: “[Aunt Chloe] was silent, gloomy, like the Balkan range (мълчалива, навъсена като Стара планина)” (42). Even cases of a play on words, i.e. the term “observation” turned into “bobservation” (49) are successfully rendered.

Changes in the text seem to both reflect the need to bring the material closer to its Bulgarian readers and the difficulties of interpretation on cultural and socio-political levels. The former type of text “re-writing” is illustrated by attempts to “Bulgarianize” the narrative – a practice typical of translations of the times. It is generally limited to some architectural specificities, terms of endearment, foods, and character names. For instance, the Southern veranda is transformed into an “одър” (22). A Black mother addresses her child through the Oriental “kuzum” (23). The Southerners of this text display a taste for “baklava,” “pitki,” “burek” and “mlini” (23–24) in place of the more traditional pies and griddle cakes and their slaves bear such unlikely names as “Andrey” and “Samuel.”

Taking into account the relatively high language aptitude of the translator, it is interesting to note the cultural-historical concepts that he could not render or grasp, although the translation reveals that he was generally aware of overall meaning. On one level, there are certain ideas and institutions, particularly political ones, for which a terminological apparatus does not yet seem to exist. Barely twenty years after the publication of this translation, pending independence, Bulgarian press accounts of the American political system reveal the existence of a flexible and sophisticated language of political discourse and persuasion. But in 1858, there still existed no equivalent terms for concepts such as “state,” “constitution” and “Senate,” which Mutev, similarly to journalists of the times, renders respectively as “durzhava/itsa,” “ustav” and “subor.”

On another level, the text falters when dealing with the essential legal and economic aspects of slavery in the United States. These slip-ups, which often occur at deeper interpretative levels of the text do not indicate gaps of knowledge so much as a different conceptual basis. Subtle and often seemingly insignificant changes transform the peculiar institution into a more recognizable form for the community of Bulgarian readers.

One of the stumbling blocks for the translator seems to have been the racial implications of the peculiar institution in the United States. This gap in knowledge would soon be bridged – a few years later the Bulgarian press not only made accessible accurate accounts of the Civil War and of the



conflicts leading to its outbreak, but sometimes used these issues to obliquely reflect attention back to the Bulgarian national independence struggle. Many of the more radical newspapers espoused a pro-Northern stand and there was sometimes expressed a strong feeling of empathy with the struggle of slaves, as in one series of articles in the early 1870s raising Touissant L'Ouverture to the level of a folk hero.<sup>25</sup> But *Uncle Tom's Cabin* belongs to the fifties and was one of the first texts to actually broach contemporary American political issues. There is even a language gap – Mutev seems to have difficulties rendering Stowe's various appellations for "Afro-American" slave, ranging from the more dignified (in the author's use of it) designation of "colored" as in "colored boy" to the degrading "nigger." If the institution of slavery was a familiar one and was sure to arouse feelings of empathy in readers for the characters, the term "Negro" was still an exotic unknown. Mutev used, as did many press accounts of the times, the term "Arab" (арапин) or "small Arab boy" (арапче) for the translation of "colored" as in Stowe's use of "colored boy." According to the Naiden Gerov dictionary, the term did carry the denotation of "Negro" in the nineteenth century. It was also, however, burdened with negative associations through its usage in folklore in connection with the image of the Muslim oppressor. One wonders how the Bulgarian reader reacted to the ambivalence of the term. In generalizations which deal with the situation of slaves, Mutev also sometimes uses the term "nevolnik" (19).

More importantly, racially-tinged relationships between the characters are subtly changed. While he was aware of the derogatory meaning of the term "nigger," for instance, Mutev shies away from using it even when textual accuracy calls for this. He employs it only once, rendering it as "black little devils" (24) in an incident where a Black mother lovingly scolds her children. Other cases of the slave-trader employing the term "nigger," or, more interestingly, of slaves jokingly using it to one another are pointedly left out of the Bulgarian text, perhaps revealing attitudes which would be offensive to Bulgarian readers. In one case of a translation inaccuracy, American designations of slave identity seem to cross the lines of Bulgarian patriarchal community relations. As the plantation owner Shelby in Stowe's text faces the slave Uncle Tom whom he has just sold down the river and who actually brought him up as a child, he unfeelingly addresses him as "boy" in several instances. This form of address speaks volumes to an American reader, synthesizing both the slave's inferior status and marking the specificity of the Southern patriarchal system through its symbolic fusion of the notions "master"



and “father.” The Bulgarian translator reverts “boy” back to “Uncle” in one case (56) and leaves it out in another, possibly keeping to his readers’ implied notions of age differences and the respect due to one’s elders, but also indirectly raising some interesting questions about self-image and relationships between subjects and figures of authority in the Ottoman Empire.

It is a well-known fact that Stowe’s division of her novel into three sections centering around the Shelby, St. Clare and Legree households enables the author to deal with the three different types of “the peculiar institution” encountered in the American South. The Kentucky background of the opening chapters gives Stowe the opportunity to discuss slavery in its mildest form – she will later contrast this to the Southern urban conditions of the St. Clare house and the hell of the Legree rural plantation in the deep South. There are key passages in the first chapters which clearly outline the slave institution and its political, legal and economic ramifications. It is interesting to note the differences, often subtle, between the English and Bulgarian texts.

One revealing case of a misreading involves the relationship between the existing laws and the institution of slavery. The English text clearly states the fact that the denial of human status to slaves in the United States is embedded in the legal system of the country: “So long as the law considers all these human beings, with beating hearts and living affections, only as so many things belonging to a master [...] so long it is impossible to make anything beautiful or desirable in the best regulated administration of slavery” (21). The Bulgarian text hedges by substituting “considers all these human beings [...] only as so many things belonging to a master” with “permits all these human beings to be bought like goods” (9). The translator then goes on to completely change the meaning of Stowe’s emphatically repeated “so long it is impossible” by substituting it with his own strong phrase “until the laws forbid all these things” (9). The first change in the text, slight as it seems, has the effect of misconstruing the very essence of the American institution of slavery for Bulgarian readers by bringing it closer to the meaning of subjugation as they would have understood it. The selling and buying of human beings was obviously not an unfamiliar phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire. The rejection of human status to slaves was a different matter altogether. One can only speculate on the reasons for the second change in the text. Perhaps the issue of the ability of reform legislation to actually improve the situation of Ottoman subjects was very much “in the air” in Bulgaria at that time following the Fermans mentioned earlier. Another



reason might have been lack of knowledge and the contradiction between the critical thrust of Stowe's argument and the excellent national image the United States was beginning to enjoy in the Bulgarian press and literature of the times. It must be noted that Mutev's introduction to the book edition of 1858 echoes this slight revision in the translation. While the greater part of this text is identified by Mutev himself as a verbatim rendition of an existing introduction to a western edition of the novel, the ending is his own. It reiterates the translator's hope that reform legislation in the United States will enable a peaceful solution to the slavery issue:

I give this book to society in the hope that this terrible sin will soon be eradicated and that the legislators of North America will clear their laws of those pages which introduce shame and contradiction into them.

Shades of misunderstanding can also be found in the translation of passages dealing with the socio-economic status of slaves on the Southern plantation. Continuing a close reading of the already quoted excerpt on the institution of slavery in Kentucky, one can find several minor changes in a sentence which conveys Stowe's ironic description of the patriarchal relationships between slaves-as-children and masters-as-parents: "whoever visits some estates (in Kentucky), and witnesses the good humored indulgence of some masters and mistresses, [...] might be tempted to dream the oft-fabled poetic legend of a patriarchal institution." The Bulgarian text makes the message even stronger by deleting "good-humored indulgence" and substituting it with the terse "treatment." The slaves in Mutev's translation seem to carry passports. Their economic rights are expanded in the Bulgarian text. At one point Stowe describes Shelby as a benevolent slaveowner: "there had never been a lack of anything which might contribute to the physical comfort of the negroes on his (Shelby's) estate." The Bulgarian translation is misleading: "and he always set store by everything necessary for the health and prosperity of the negroes on his/their plantations." The addition of "prosperity" and reading of the last few words, in particular, as referring either to Shelby's several plantations or to the slaves' own plantations/lands is ambiguous. The translator's difficulty in rendering the concept of slave status in respect to property ownership in the American South is echoed at other times in the Bulgarian text. At one point, Tom voices his concern that the master's plantation will go "to rack" once he is not there to oversee the work of the other slaves: "The boys all means well, but they're powerful car'less" (73). In the Bulgarian text this is rendered as



“the boys mean well, but they’re careless about other people’s property” (56). Needless to say, the economic essence of the American peculiar institution is lost on Bulgarian readers, whose experience of economic servitude in respect to land usage was of a different order.

If the issue of religion and the belief that Christianity should take a central place in the private and public sphere are very much at the heart of Stowe’s novel, the Bulgarian text, which doesn’t trace Tom’s development, is far too brief to do justice to this view. The translation, as far as it covers the episodes with Uncle Tom, is accurate, even down to the details of his family’s at-home prayer meeting (ch. V) where unknown terms such as “psalms” are provided with bracketed explanations (29). While the details of religious worship are handled well, there is at least one indication that Uncle Tom’s type of submission or Stowe’s idea of the literary type of the slave as the non-violent Christ-like martyr, might have been difficult to translate into the culture in this volatile pre-independence period. In one typical passage, the American Tom is ready to extend compassion even to slave traders when he tells his wife, “you oughter think what an awful state a poor crittur’s soul’s in that’ll do them ar’ things, – you oughter thank God that you an’t like him, Chloe. I’m sure I’d rather be sold, ten thousand times over, than to have all that ar’ crittur’s got to answer for” (73). The Bulgarian Tom is not so forgiving: “you ought to think what an awful state those abominable men’s (нечестивци) souls are in” (55). One wonders what the translator would have done with Simon Legree.

The above example raises some questions in regard to the abbreviated form in which the first translation was published. It is unclear how the character of Uncle Tom, as well as the other “exotic” figures and settings (in Bulgarian terms), would have functioned for Bulgarian readers. There were, of course, various reasons for leaving the text unfinished. Judging by the bad state of Mutev’s health, which forced him to leave the journal, some of them might have been personal (although he does contribute two additional chapters (VIII and IX) to the 1859 volume, rounding off the story of Eliza’s escape to her meeting with Senator Bird, and perhaps indicating that he had plans to continue). Also, according to N. Aretov, it was conventional translation practice in the fifties to translate novel fragments, rather than whole works.<sup>26</sup> In spite of these explanations, there still remain grounds for additional conjecture. The novel was never finished and yet it seemed to have been popular enough to inspire the publication of a separate book edition in the same year as the magazine translation. The very fact that it came out



twice in this form and that the reading public would wait another fifteen years before a second, full translation was attempted could mean that its readers and publishers accepted this abbreviated version as a unified whole in its own right and that it had its own specific place in the cultural context of the times. One of the reasons for the abbreviation of the text at this historical juncture might have been the fact that these first several chapters encapsulating the Kentucky section introduce, for all their “exotic American” setting, themes and literary types that were more or less familiar to Bulgarian readers. In the first place, the Kentucky section with its theme of slavery in the conditions of a patriarchal rural community would have been more culturally close as “slave” geography than the urban New Orleans or deep South settings. Also, these first episodes focus primarily on one of the novel’s thematic lines – the story of Eliza who is, moreover, more culturally familiar than Tom as a heroine who is practically white. Put in other words, by introducing Eliza as the main protagonist of Stowe’s tale, the first translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* entered Bulgarian culture as a narrative representing the evils of slavery more through the perspective of gender rather than race. There are various cultural reasons why this gender-oriented version would have been appropriate for Bulgarian readers of the times. The fleeing Eliza, about to be dispossessed of her child, was a transcultural symbol of slavery – her Bulgarian sister and the motif of children taken by force from parents not only existed in folklore, but was soon to become a part of modern Bulgarian literature. Another important factor is that Eliza is fleeing not only slavery, but, also, symbolically, a “benign” patriarchal community which cannot offer her and her child any security. She is on her way towards establishing a nuclear western type of family outside the confines of slavery (in Stowe’s novel achieved by Eliza’s final escape to Canada). Her husband’s story with its strong arguments in defence of wage as against slave labor and against the suppression of entrepreneurship in the context of economic dependence was also a culturally familiar one. Indeed, George with his strong urge for education, which he receives abroad, and his pursuit of freedom and republican ideals, could practically have served as a national type in the Bulgarian context. Even figures such as the independent and critically-minded Mrs. Shelby, representing a strong feminine force in the novel, or Mrs. Bird, who has such an important influence over her husband, would not have been totally out of place in the Bulgarian context. On the contrary, judging by the incipient discussion on the place of women in Bulgarian society, evident in the press of the times, these characters mark out areas of



social and cultural experience for which models were already being sought and cultural images negotiated.

It is a truism to point out that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most widely translated novels of the nineteenth century and that each society related to it in culture-specific ways that reflected its own needs and realities. To provide one example, in a letter, published in Garrison's *The Liberator*, Tourgeneff makes very strong claims for affinities between Stowe's text and the Russian context, between the condition of slavery and serfdom. He even stresses similarities of literary representation:

Many scenes depicted in this book seem the exact counterpart of events equally frightful, which occurred in Russia. Even in the comic features of this romance, there is hardly one in which I did not recognize something similar in the Russian comedy.<sup>27</sup>

Tourgeneff goes on to mention the comic character of the wife of St. Clare who reminds him very much of the "heroine of a Russian comedy." Yet, Mrs. St. Clare, Stowe's illustration of the fact that the system degrades the master as much as it is degrading to the slave, who would not have been out of place in a Gogol text, would obviously have been less comprehensible as a character for Bulgarian readers of the times. This applies to many of Stowe's other literary creations in this novel, including, to a great degree, Uncle Tom himself.

Tourgeneff felt confident enough in his analogies between the American and Russian contexts to prophesy about the effects the solution of the slave issue in the United States would have in his own country:

The act which is to make free millions of blacks will be hailed with delight by tens of millions of whites, who suffer as slaves in other lands, and who will see in that glorious emancipation the prelude of their own deliverance.

The Bulgarian edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflects a different cultural perspective. In terms of its American referents, Mutev's translation seems to be still in the process of "opening up" language and knowledge to unexplored fields of political, cultural and social experience. As I have tried to show in the above analysis, the early selection of Stowe's text was not just due to its anti-slavery content, but to the fact that this novel fitted (and was "re-written" to fit) Bulgaria's own cultural priorities of the times. Judging by its being situated in the important cultural journal *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* and by the type of contiguous non-literary foreign texts published alongside of it, there seem



to have been a number of factors conducive to its selection including the church and educational reforms under way in this period of Bulgarian history. The National Revival interest in the “literature-modelling” functions of translations, a function repeated in other revivalist cultures of the same period, is reflected in the fact that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* served to expand the possibilities of the sentimental mode which had entered the culture a decade earlier and played an important part in the initial formation of a modern national literature.

Judging by the effects of the text’s abbreviation, it would not be going too far to point out that the first translation shifts the emphasis from race to gender and reconstructs Stowe’s novel through only one of its two basic themes – the story of Eliza and her heroic escape. This is the narrative accepted by the Bulgarian community of readers of that period. Interestingly, this was not the first time that the theme of subjugation and gender are linked in Bulgarian translated literature.<sup>28</sup> The connection of Stowe’s text to gender issues is not incidental and needs additional clarification. It can be said that, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* fitted into a discourse on gender issues already taking shape in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. To this end, the novel must be viewed against the background of the Bulgarian literary scene and in connection with the “American theme” developed in the press of the times.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Todor Shishkov published an announcement in the periodical *Chitalishte* to the effect that he had finished a translation of *Chicheva Tomina Koliba ili Zhivotat na Negrite v Amerika* (translated from French), but did not have the necessary funds to publish it and was looking for a sponsor (1874:112).

<sup>2</sup> See Несторова, с. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See Леков, с. 42.

<sup>5</sup> See Шишманов.

<sup>6</sup> See Несторова, гл. III.

<sup>7</sup> See Reynolds.

<sup>8</sup> After finishing his high school education in Odessa, Mutev was accepted in the Department of Physics and Mathematics at the Richelyov Lycee, later to become the University of Novorosiisk in 1865. While in Odessa he joined the first Bulgarian literary circle, which included such figures as Chintulov, Gerov, Bogorov, Elena Muteva and others. Its members produced their first literary pieces – Elena Muteva’s poetry, the first Bulgarian poem “Stoyan i Rada” (Gerov, 1845) and Chintulov’s first works – while living abroad. After a brief stay at the Faculty of Philosophy in Bonn, Mutev transferred to the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin where he defended his Doctorate in Physics in 1842 at the age of twenty-four. At this time he



was already fluent in several languages and actually wrote his dissertation in Latin. It is not clear when he learned English well enough to translate from the original. There is no precise information on the fifteen years following his graduation – there are indications that he spent at least several of them in Sankt Petersburg, possibly teaching philosophy. In 1858 he was invited to Istanbul by the “Community of Bulgarian Letters” (*obshtina na bulgarskata knizhnina*) to edit *Bulgarski Knizhitsi*. After leaving the journal, he went to Bolgrad in 1860 to head the Bulgarian High school there. It was in the four years before his death in 1864 that he was able to put into practice many of his ideas on educational reform: this school, with its well-educated staff, excellent library, and publishing facilities was a model educational facility. For information on Mutev’s biography, see: Бъчварова, т. III.

<sup>9</sup> See Леков, с. 44.

<sup>10</sup> See Пенев, т. II, с. 474.

<sup>11</sup> This theme can, of course, be taken much further. As Prof. Veselin Traikov points out education was a major focus in National Revival press accounts dealing with the United States. Information about American experiences in setting up and financially maintaining schools, as well as on reforms connected with the functions and content of school programs was quickly reaching National Revival readers. Figures such as Horace Mann, for instance, and his reform movement to introduce the public school system (and in general to use education as a means for social reform) received extensive press coverage in the 70s in periodicals such as *Chitalishte*.

<sup>12</sup> See Леков, с. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Кой и какви трябва да бъдат предметите на „Българските книжици“. – Български книжици, 1859, с. 7.

<sup>14</sup> See Иванов, с. 28. The great hopes *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* aroused in terms of literature and language development are evident in reviews by contemporaries, even when these are outspokenly critical. A two-part article published in *Tsarigradski Vestnik* emphasizes the importance of the journal in terms of language formation and enrichment. The author states that it “is an undertaking of national significance” (дело общонародно). Mounting a critical attack against Bogorov, the second designated editor of *Bulgarski Knizhitsi*, for his archaic use of the Bulgarian language, the author states that the hopes for the shaping of a national language rest on *Knizhitsi* because of the impact it has on its contemporaries and the influence it will continue to hold over future generations: “The journal must be, is, and will continue to be a model and handbook (ръководство) for all fledgling writers.” Its major goals are “firstly, to help shape our language (за образованието на езика ни) and, secondly, to spread useful information to our people.” As this criticism makes clear, the questions of language-building and knowledge expansion through the flow of scientific and cultural information were central issues from the very inception of the journal.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Бъчварова, с. 32.

<sup>16</sup> Български книжици, 1858, с. 48.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. William Pitt (1759–1806) was British Prime Minister in 1783–1801 and 1804–1806. It is unclear whether Kasapskii is referring to George Canning (1770–1827), the prominent English statesman and Foreign Minister (1822–27), or to his cousin Stratford Canning (1786–1880), a long-term diplomat who twice served as Ambassador to Constantinople. The reference to Baring may be to one Alexander Baring (1774–1848), a financier and statesman, or to Sir Francis Baring (1740–



1810), merchant, Director of the East India Company (1799) and author of texts on the Bank of England. Lionel Nathan Rotschild (1808–1879) was a banker, philanthropist and member of the House of Commons.

- <sup>18</sup> The journal explores “high” finances with a series of articles on banks and the banking system in Europe and the United States. These pieces do not have a specified author and it might very well be Mutev himself who wrote or more probably translated and adapted the texts for Bulgarian needs. While the serial begins on a conciliatory note towards Ottoman authority (the articles are ostensibly written in accordance with the decision of “our Exalted Government (високо правителство) to found a united bank in the state”), these pieces actually acquaint Bulgarian readers with statistics and detailed information on the contemporary status, structures and activities of the Western banking system. They could be read as a subversive preparation, consciously intended or not, for future “western-oriented” capitalist development. What is more, they literally expand the possibilities of discourse in this field by introducing a new set of vocabulary terms and financial language in the process. The articles employ French and English terminology in the original and sometimes offer Bulgarian equivalents where possible in brackets.

Even as Mutev leads his readers into the intricacies of contemporary Western finances, ironically he also acquaints them with the possibility of yet another type of political and economic discourse: “Someone by the name of Friedrich Engels wrote in his essay on the working class in Manchester that economic crises in England are periodically repeated every five or eight years and many other writers have long referred to the economic law that this calculation is based on,” (Commercial Supplement, p. 50).

- <sup>19</sup> See Brodhead.

<sup>20</sup> *Bulgarski Knizhitsi* 1, Vol. I, Part III. Sept. 1858, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., vol. I, General Journal Supplement, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> See: Hedrick 111–112. The Prussian schools were also later studied by Horace Mann, who was interested in the school-reform model for his public school system.

<sup>23</sup> The first woman writer to enter Bulgarian literature via translation seems to have been Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711–1780), whose *Magazines des Enfants* (1757) was first translated in 1851 and soon gave rise to several Bulgarian adaptations.

<sup>24</sup> Quotations from the English and Bulgarian texts of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will be followed by page numbers in brackets from here on. Quotations from the Bulgarian text will be taken from the book edition of Mutev's translation *The English language quotations are from Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York: Dolphin Books Edition, 1960.

<sup>25</sup> See „Независимост“, 1873.

<sup>26</sup> See Апетов.

<sup>27</sup> See *Liberator*, 1852.

<sup>28</sup> There are few other literary texts available in the 1850s and 60s which bring together the themes of slavery and the New World. Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Magazines des Enfants* was probably the first translated text to broach this subject. The work consists of a series of cautionary moral tales linked together by a common frame and a narrator who uses the tales to educate his pupils. One of the texts, set in America, links slavery and gender by relating the tragic story of an Indian woman married to a white European, who subsequently abandons and sells her while she is pregnant. It went through several translations and adaptations in the National Revival Period, including a verse rendition by Petko Slaveikov.



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## Construction of National Space Along the Railroad in American and Bulgarian Literature

A scene from Thurber's "University Days" (43) features the Ohio State tackle, who is asked by the economics professor to name a means of transportation: "I might suggest the one which we commonly take in making long journeys across land" The professor continues his prompting, "Choo-choo-choo".

"How did you come to college this year, Mr. Bolenciewicz?" asked the professor. "Chuffa chuffa, chuffa chuffa."

"M'father sent me," said the football player.

The moral of this little story might be that only an utter blockhead would fail to recognize the sound of a moving train in the 20th century. The train is often an indispensable element in moving pictures, the Western being only an isolated example, and it has made tumultuous journeys through hundreds of literary works. The rise of the railroad opened new territories to American and European homesteaders and industrialists. It also provided a faint glimmer of hope for an entire 'travelling nation'<sup>1</sup> of unemployed and dispossessed hoboes and bums during the dark times of the American Depression. In Europe, for those peoples who were forcibly removed to inhospitable wildernesses or to death camps, the train became an object of horror.

It has been long, indeed, since in September 1825 the world's first true railroad traveled nine miles between Stockton and Darlington, UK, hence one could hardly point a finger at the first journey the train accomplished in poetry or fiction. Nevertheless, recalling the works of Dickens, George Eliot, Lawrence, Joyce, Hardy, Bradbury, Whitman, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Twain, Norris, Morrison, Tolstoy, Pasternak, Vazov, Konstantinov, Hugo, De Amicis, Maxime Du Camp, and Flaubert, to mention only a few, we can confidently say that there is a rich literary tradition that depicts trains or railroading in general, albeit often only by fleeting reference or allusion. When the first train of carriages was launched along its iron road, it also chuffed and chugged its way straight into the literary imaginary.



There are many studies on how the technology of travel and transportation has played a central role in the general transformation of modern societies. If we confine ourselves only to rail travel and transport, we may still consider at length how trains are made; the work of building and running railroads; the exchange of commodities by rail; and the many ways trains have affected both the material and spiritual conditions of modern life. The railroad has acquired a wide range of cultural values, whether described in terms of behavior, sensibility, mentality, cultural models, or ideology. What is more, we can find a literary 'illustration' for any of these aspects. It would be a Sisyphian task to attempt an exhaustive study of the railroad in literature, and to account at the same time for the railroad's overall impact on the literary imaginary, which goes beyond this or that literary work to influences on styles of modern writing and underlying philosophical considerations of the modern condition.

To make matters more complicated, literary representations of the railroad have always been determined by such considerations as the time in which the literary work was written, the attitudes of individual writers, and prevailing winds of national tradition, which can range from utterly romantic to coldly utilitarian. Just as the train has moved dynamically across the land, changing the very landscape that it traversed, so its representation in literary works has also changed, as underlying attitudes or structures of feeling, as defined in Williams' *The Long Revolution*, were transformed by the railroad's incursions.

Remo Ceserani's "The Impact of the Train on Modern Literary Imagination" published in 1999, draws upon a diverse selection of literary examples and seeks to establish a network of semantic relationships which the train inaugurates in Italian, French, German and English literary works. While Ceserani admits "the problematic and ambiguous combination of the messages communicated" by the rise of the railroad, he identifies a number *topoi* (tracks, stations, carriages, etc.) that have become closely associated with the industrial revolution and the modern (both modernity and modernism). Ceserani develops his classification by establishing a series of binary contrasts: industrial vs. agricultural, organic vs. mechanical, modern vs. pre-modern and so on. Finally, he points out the mediating role of literature, which works toward the reconciliation of these opposing extremes. As he concludes:



The two different reactions to the irruption of the train and the railroad in the social and individual world [are], on one side, the enthusiastic acceptance and celebration of the progressive triumphs of the new invention, and on the other side, the troubled denunciation of its evil effects on the social landscape and the individual sensibility.

The 'point of departure' for the present essay is the generally positive attitude toward the train, or more appropriately, toward the railroad, in American literary tradition up to the last decades of 19th c., an attitude which is parallel to the articulation of the literary image of the railroad in Bulgarian literature, namely Vazov's "Old Iotso Is Seeing" (1901), in terms of the national. Though both traditions later grew less sanguine about the role of the railroads, during the first decades after the introduction of the railroad in the two countries, literary works generally celebrate the new technology. What is more, in a number of examples of American and Bulgarian literature the railroad has been tightly bound with national identity. Following this 'train of thought', it is of interest to study how and why the railroad's advent in these two countries, and subsequently or simultaneously in their literatures, has become associated with a sense of national belonging, nation building and the articulation of nationhood.

Here the emphasis falls on American literary examples and the works considered were published in the nineteenth century (except Kingston's which is set in that period, however), when the railroad was generally portrayed as useful and benign, despite the sometimes skeptical attitude toward the railroad expressed in the works of such writers as Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and H. Adams. In other words, the focus in the text to follow illuminates a limited sample from the multidimensional panorama of 'trains in literature', mentioning in fleeting examples possible parallels with the Bulgarian experience which lies at the centre of my other publications. The additional subject limitation of the present paper, besides the national one, lies in the conscious choice to discuss in more detail the 'positively charged halo' around the railroad, rather than follow diachronically the change(s) in its literary presence.

A seminal work of the subsequent structure-of-feeling transformation is Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. In it the author reflects on the writings of nineteenth-century American authors which bear witness to the dissonance caused by the entrance of the machine into what had hitherto been conceived as a pastoral frontier. For Marx, the arrival of the railroad was tantamount to an



invasion into what had been a harmonious and self-contained landscape. The train brought with it new and unforeseen possibilities:

Within the lifetime of a single generation, a rustic and in large parts wild landscape was transformed into the site of the world's greatest machine. It would be difficult to imagine more profound contradictions of value or meaning than those made manifest by this circumstance. Its influence upon our literature is suggested by the recurrent image of the machine's sudden entrance into the landscape. (343)

However, perhaps more important than the way the railroad invades virgin territory is the way it helped unify and build national economy and national identity, whether in America or Bulgaria. The railroad transforms and cuts across both the geographical and the imaginary map of nation-states, relocating geopolitical and metaphorical boundaries. For this reason, it would be useful for this discussion to consider at some length the complex interaction between such broad concepts as time and space, and the way those concepts were transformed upon the 'arrival' of the train on rails.

From the focal point adopted in this paper as a whole, I would axiomatically accept that the 'arrival' of the train on rails was instrumental in the process during which time and space ceased to be what they used to. Metaphorically speaking, the parallel rails of the railroad provided an iron thread around which spatial and temporal relations were re-articulated. First of all, due to their 'smooth nature' they ensured a new speed of travel, which in the vocabulary of 19th century brought about the "annihilation of time and space" (35), to use Lardner's phrase, and in the words of Schivelbusch "the temporal shrinking of transportation causes the expansion of the transport space" (33). Then, due to the fact that rails cut into the territory they traverse, they quite literally change the landscape with all the artificial constructions along their way, tunnels and bridges, and further on "destroy some of the quaintness and isolation of rural areas" (Kern 34), as well as institute their own universal time, for "it was the railroad companies and not the governments which were the first to institute it [standardisation of time]" (ibid. 12). Along the lines of the temporal changes on the landscape, "the landscapes lose their Now in an entirely concrete sense: the railroads deprive them of their local time" (Kern 39) and "intrude upon the uniqueness of private experience in private time" (Kern 34) substituting it with public one.

In terms of the expansion of space, however, rails ensure a movement behind the 'line' of the horizon of a particular locality, thus very much



pushing boundaries forward to the limits of the closure of one, viewed as a whole, space. Considering spatial relocation, while geographically space is not destroyed (could be transformed, though), the imagined frontiers are the ones to acquire a mobile, pulsating status.

Last but not least, it is in the nature of the rails to cross the frontiers, too, and along them "each train that passes a frontier weaves the web of human federation" (Gladstone as cited in Kern 229). The communication network weaving is accomplished along, very literally, an axis, which unifies and 'uniforms'. Additionally, the nature of the axis, the rails, is stable in the sense that once drawn or designed it is not likely to be moved at a whim, it is to last and endure, in other words it also becomes crucial with what space(s), and in what direction, the affiliation or the woven iron thread will be projected.

The unity metaphor, as well as the spatial boundaries' relocation, the closing of the frontiers, the cutting through geographical/political obstructions and the destruction of "obsolete particularisms" (Kern 229) are the major factors to be considered in the literary movement of the train along iron rails in the national space.

An article published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1839 discusses the "gradual annihilation, approaching almost to the final extinction, of that space and those distances which have hitherto been supposed unalterably to separate the various nations of the globe," and continues:

For instance, supposing that railroads, even at our present simmering rate of travelling, were to be suddenly established all over England, the whole population of the country would, speaking metaphorically, at once advance en masse, and place their chairs nearer to the fireside of their metropolis by two-thirds of the time which now separates them from it; they would also sit nearer to one another by two-thirds of the time which now alienates them. If the rate were to be sufficiently accelerated, this process would be repeated; [...] [and] all would proportionally approach the *national hearth* (emphasis mine). (22)

Written only about nine years after the opening of the first railway line between Liverpool and Manchester on September 15 1830 (which is the first regular line for passengers' transportation), this article already pinpoints one of the key aspects of the impact railway introduction had on the 'geography' of nations. In the written in 1939 *Economie Sociale* by C. Pecqueur the railroad travel is viewed as the major factor for the new "condensed geography" of France (26). The process of diminishing or



shrinking of space by this new means of transportation is a dual one: it also brings about an expansion of transport space. In reality, however, the spatial dimensions of a given country do not change, it is on “the map of imagination,” to use Pequeur’s phrase (26), that such transformation is perceived.

The connection between the two gains significance in the realisation that geography plays:

an important role in the politics of nations and that the space commanded by a country is an important factor in the determination of its political and economic life. [...] No one argued that smallness was a source for national greatness. (Kern 227–228)

The nineteenth century literary examples in the USA point to the realisation of the unity of national space and national greatness along the route of the railroad “tying the Eastern to the Western sea...” in Whitman’s “Passage to India” (line 64). Though the first all-rail route was opened between Chicago and the East Coast in 1853, the impact of the train on American soil has been regarded mainly in relation to the undertaking, which was successfully brought to a close on May 10 1862 at Promontory, Utah – the completion of the first transcontinental line. This line, “the umbilical of the nation,” as Raban calls it in “The Unlamented West” (60), entertained the imagination of people even before its construction. The editor of the *Knickerbocker* predicted it as early as 1837, for example. In the full frame of Andrew J. Russell’s photograph, which is usually cut to focus on the group in the centre, of “the golden spike event” one of the ‘accents’ is clearly the American flag, Old Glory, as an unmistakable marker of an event of national importance. Quite obviously, the construction of the railroad in the USA has been viewed as an active agent in the formation of the parameters of American nation mediated through the ideas of the frontier and its significance in American terms (Turner), and the key role the West played in the articulation of what constitutes the ‘American’ as different from European. In support of that view come the lines from the *Railroad History* website:

... the numbers do not give a real sense of the impact of railroads on American society. America was fast becoming a nation apart from its European roots, and was developing its own way of doing things. The railroad played a major role in many of these developments.



In more detail the article summarises the link in seven aspects roughly amounting to how the railroad changed perceptions of time, space and distance, revolutionized industry and business, created new dynamics of employment, initiated and promoted settlement, employed immigrant labour and accelerated the relationship among the various strata of society.

In Chapter 7, *This Land of Promise*, James Ward argues that in the American vocabulary the railroad becomes synonymous to the West, starting with the assertion that “nothing so captured Americans’ imagination as their West. It became the metaphor for the character of America.” In linguistic terms the adjectives which promoters used to describe the West were those that were often applied to the entire nation. Enthusiasts of the Western idea emphasized that the West was big, continental in scope, and, like the nation itself, boundless, with its limits always beyond the horizon. Along these lines a number of railroad companies included “and Western” in their corporate names as a testimony that the railroad and the idea of the West, and the idea of the American nation for that matter, go hand in hand. Others focused on the idea of unity, i.e. The Union Pacific, which accomplished the first transcontinental line. Additionally, ‘great’ was used as an attribute to the West, i. e. The Great West, the nation and the railroad, tightly binding the nation with “bands of iron” in Ward.

The railroad also, for instance, “moved into Montana like Caesar marching through Gaul, freely inventing the land it occupied as it went along” (Raban 61). The “iron horse” was inventing the land to the extent that, what used to be designated in school atlases as an area called the Great American Desert – “an imaginative vacancy, without any flora or fauna” (ibid. 62), started filling in with “geography” in very concrete terms. The pre-railroad age is the early national period (Burchell & Gray 105) during which the space of the nation is still an “imaginative vacancy” and its geographical, as well as imaginative, map is yet to be designed.

The designing of the American nation, in view of the points outlined above, has a dynamic character, it is a process of movement during which one frontier line has been replaced by another, a process with a westward direction, away from the ties of the past, away from European ancestry, as Turner points out initially “the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe,” and later in his essay, “the frontier decreased our dependence on England.” These ideas function very much in parallel to the ‘iron-thread’, the knitter of the country, to paraphrase what Melville observes in his short stories in the middle of the century. The



process of inventing the landscape of the geographical territory works towards the invention of the nation (Gellner).

Paraphrasing Turner, the invented American nation possesses a composite character, which has been forged on the border-line between the already inhabited space and the vacant territory beyond, i. e. on the frontier; up to its close declared by the Superintendent of the Census in 1890, which marks the end of the third period in the history of the Frontier West (Burchell and Gray 105), capital letters theirs.

In support of the above considerations comes Turner's statement in his seminal work "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" that:

In the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics.

Extending the argument further, it is also the crucible of the railroad construction which makes the "fusion of races among us more complete," as stated in "*American Literature: Its Position in the Present Time, and Prospects for the Future*", where Margaret Fuller continues that the complete 'fusion' (ibid.) or 'invention' (Gellner) would not be possible until:

the physical resources of the country being explored, all its regions studded with towns, broken by the plow, netted together by railways and telegraph lines.

Thus the new nation is articulated very much in terms of communication links and is communication-based (Smith). In parallel to these views run the words of Turner:

Nothing works for nationalism like the intercourse within the nation. Mobility of population is death to localism, and the Western Frontier worked irresistibly in unsettling the population.

Or, adopting the developed several paragraphs above synonym line, it is the railroad which provides for that mobility and brings about the death of localism, the two of them being key factors in the construction of a unified national space – the Union Pacific line.

In literary terms Thoreau's *Walden* relates this sense of nation building resulting from the destruction of the locality of Walden and continues that "one well-conducted institution [the railroad, reference mine] regulates the whole country." His mythologising of the iron-horse image also works along the lines of the separate/distinct ethnic groups being melted into the pot, to



use the dying (or already dead) metaphor, of the American nation as his reference to the numerous Irish, among others, on whose dead bodies the American railroad marched through the American landscape suggests. The most marked example of the Americanization of immigrants while they work on the construction of the railroad is the 'Chinese case'.

In the late seventies and throughout the eighties of the 20c Asian American historians, playwrights and novelists recall the labour of Chinese immigrants on the Central Pacific to make a case for national belonging. The Transcontinental railroad was their claim to legitimacy and their greatest legacy. Here I refer to one work which, however, is emblematic for the working of the equation railroad worker = American. Curiously enough the novel in question is set in Stockton, California – not the Stockton from the Stockton-Darlington line of 1825 – a special spot, the only Pacific coast city to be crossed by three railroads – the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific and Western Pacific. The tracks run just behind the house of the main heroine and prove a rich source for games, daydreams and encounters with hoboes. More importantly though, the grandfather in Maxine Hong Kingston's novel *China Men*, in which the historical context is 1863–69 and 1870s–1906, exemplifies the type of heroic portraiture surrounding the Chinese railroad worker:

[Grandfather] spent the rest of his time on the railroad laying and bending and hammering the ties and rails [until] the engine from the West and the one from the East rolled toward one another and touched. The Transcontinental railroad was finished. [...] "Only Americans could have done it," they said [...] [Ah Goong] was an American for having built the railroad. (145)

Opening brackets here, I would like to emphasise the continental dimension in the realisation of space in American national terms. The boundaries of that imagined space were to be realised in very concrete geographical terms, from East to West, between the Atlantic and the Pacific coast-lines, hence the importance of the Promontory event. The centennial celebration of the railroad in W. Whitman's "To a Locomotive in Winter" also points to the continental parameters of American national space:

Type of the modern;  
Emblem of motion and power,  
Pulse of the continent.

Continental space acquires also temporal dimensions in Melville's *Moby Dick*, (518) with the reference to time-tables in "the mighty iron Leviathan



of the modern railway,” whose regular schedules are like the way “doctors time a baby’s pulse.” In the dialogic connection between the two texts, and metaphorically speaking, the space of the continent shrinks to the condensed shape of the body of a baby – a newly born nation with a railroad for an umbilical cord, or, as John Rollin Ridge writes in the 1868 poem “The Atlantic Cable” in reference to the railroad – “a throbbing heartstring of Humanity!”

Closing the brackets of the digression, the key message in Kingston’s novel is the legitimization of national belonging through the participation in the enterprise – the construction of the transcontinental railroad, projecting from the assertion that her grandfather “was an American for having built the railroad” (145). It is also very intriguing to note that ‘they said, “Only Americans could have done it,”’ alluding to pioneering and the articulation of nationhood in purely, uniquely American terms, parallel to the tracks of the iron road, very much like the Bulgarian discourse around the same enterprise in Vazov’s vocabulary. The parameters of the national space are drawn initially away from history and oppression in view also of what Stegner summarises in ‘The American West as Living Space’ (Krakauer 15).

It should not be denied [...] that being footloose has always exhilarated us. It is associated in our minds with escape from *history and oppression* and law and irksome obligations, with absolute freedom, and the road has always led west. [emphasis mine]

In this urge to break the ties with history and oppression American experience resembles very much the Bulgarian one, where the optimistic hopes for its [the breaking away] realisation are invested into the construction of the railroad.

Curiously enough, in the vocabulary of American grandeur, Henry James’s Christopher Newman, in the written in 1876 *The American* (Chapter 5), the railway in Brussels is seen as the “reappearance of this familiar symbol of *American* civilisation” [emphasis mine], while the Bulgarian delegation to the exhibition in Prague is eager to boast of the Bulgarian achievement, equated to the Bulgarian train in Aleko Konstantinov’s text, the carriages for which have been *imported* from Europe (24–39).

Yet another aspect strikes as quite similar to Bulgarian experience – the fact that the territory traversed by the railroad falls into the notion of the New West (Raban 61) promoted by railroad writers and illustrators which portray a free, rich farmland, a “*sight unseen*” (ibid.) [emphasis mine]. Or, if we annihilate the space in-between, the ‘unseen’ but ‘heard’ by Iotso New Bulgaria.



In America the New-ness of the West also builds upon the prior presense of an Old, imagined and vacant, concept and on national heroes as is the case with Whitman's "When Lilacs Last In the Dooryard Bloom'd." In this poem, except for the word 'depot', Whitman does not explicitly point out that Lincoln's coffin moved by train from Washington to Illinois, a fact that his readers at the time would have known and remembered. Here a central theme is the unity of the States in "long panoramas of visions" and the train's progress allows him to draw momentary pictures, 'take snapshots', along the coffin's path. Though constructed along somewhat different lines, i. e. the standpoint of the poet, the Preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, summarises perfectly Whitman's position with regard to national time, memory and future:

Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet [...] he says to the past Rise and walk before me, that I may realize you. He learns the lesson [...] he places himself where the future becomes present. (iii)

In view of the stand expressed above, Whitman's "Passage to India" vocalises a passage to more than India by heralding a new spiritual world in showing how the passage unifies time as well as space. Following in brief the history of India from Alexander the Great's times, Whitman metaphorically realizes Columbus's and da Gama's dream of a passage to India, which in concrete historical terms resulted in the discovery of the continent – "Land found, and nations born – thou born, America" (line 79). In this continent during the poet's now the railroad is "tying the Eastern to the Western sea" and is "the road between Europe and Asia" via the USA (lines 65–66).

In Whitman's rhetoric the railroad, "surmounting every barrier" (line 50), carries freight and passengers along the Platte, to the Laramie plains and Wahsatch mountains to the "clear waters of lake Tahoe" (lines 50–60), thus naming literally and metaphorically, the vacant space between the Eastern and the Western coasts. In his words again it is a spanned earth, an expanse of space "connected by net-work" (line 33). "The Races, neighbours to marry and be given in marriage... the lands to be welded together" mirroring again the composite unity of a nation around the axis of its backbone [the railroad] with the historical reference to Promontory where East and West met (line 58). The same theme is echoed very directly



in Bret Harte's "What the Engines Said" in *American Ballads: Naughty, Ribald, and Classic* (67), among other railroad ballads which on the whole view the train as a public space which can bring people together.

Jarrell ends his article on Whitman's work with a story which seems quite apt for the discussion here:

If some day a tourist notices, among the ruins of New York City, a copy of *Leaves of Grass*, and stops and picks it up and reads some lines in it, she will be able to say to herself, "How very American! If he and his country had not existed, it would have been impossible to imagine them!" (152)

Indeed, along the lines of the present paper it would have been difficult to imagine the American nation without the railroad which, in contrast to the European context, but very much in the Bulgarian vocabulary, has been enthusiastically acclaimed by a large proportion of the American public. In this respect, as the emblem of progress, the new technology promises the mobilisation of all social forces. It is greeted as the ultimate means to convert the wilderness into a fruitful field and foster the rapid advancement of a civilisation guided by the same spirit which a couple of centuries before had pervaded the first settlements on the continent: the image of the New World as the New Eden transformed into the New West.

In short, in the course of the nineteenth century, the railroad turns into a veritable symbol of the American national character and promises the realisation of the Dream: unlimited spatial and social mobility along with a rapid and more effective dissemination of shared ideals and national virtues. And this drive is so powerful and pervasive that even a writer of a somewhat different disposition, such as Hawthorne, equates the railroad to life itself and makes his central character in the *House of the Seven Gables: A Romance*, written in 1851, Clifford see the train as "destined to do away with those stale ideas of home and fireside, and substitute something better" (Chapter 17) and lead to a "national hearth" in the language of *Quarterly Review* article of 1839.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Single quotes in the main body of the text indicate metaphorical, ironic, coined etc. use of these words or phrases by the author of the article, if not otherwise stated.

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## Ethnic Ghosts and Supernatural Forces: The Notion of Race and the Occult in the USA and Bulgaria at the Beginning of the 20th Century

*"What kind of meetings do you refer to? You speak as if it were a rendezvous of witches on the Brocken."*

*"Well, so it is; they are all witches and wizards, mediums, and spirit-rappers, and roaring radicals."*

*The Bostonians, Henry James*

Is there a possible connection to be found between the notion of race and the occult in two believed to be so different one from another cultural contexts as the USA and Bulgaria at the beginning of the 20th century? The present essay has set itself to fulfil this difficult but challenging task.

It is a well-researched fact that the second half of the 19th century besides witnessing the unprecedented technological and industrial development of the Gilded Age in the USA, saw the rapid and sometimes frightening boom in supernatural occurrences – more and more people became convinced in the existence of forces beyond rational understanding and the "mediums and spirit-rappers" caught the popular imagination with grip and vehemency. This gave birth to a movement that became known as Modern Spiritualism. It started in 1848 with the strange events at John Fox's home in Hydesville, New York and culminated in the creation of the learned Society for Psychical Research to investigate all these supernatural occurrences believed by so many to be true.

Opposed to the old spiritualism which treated spirit exclusively within the framework of theology, this new movement concentrated on the scientific possibility of explaining the communication between consciousnesses in a novel and aptly coherent with the new scientific age way. As Martha Banta observes in her seminal study *Henry James and the Occult*: "Because of its common focus upon mind and spirit, it [New Spiritualism] could be accused of or praised for being both a pseudo-religion and a pseudo-science" (10). It



drew simultaneously on alchemist ideas of animal magnetism and Swedenborg's anti-materialist notions thus laying to a certain extent the foundations of William James's psychology and Henri Bergson's philosophy. Both of them, as Mary Esteve claims, "called into question prevailing assumptions within current psychological and philosophical discourses, assumptions that engendered too facile equations between memory and/or consciousness and sense perception [...] each [...] call[ing] into question traditional notions of the harmonious, seamlessly self-conscious, and deeply interiorized subject" (196). This "calling into question" was in fact connected to the possibility of the existence of double selves, which for some time, especially in the last decade of the 19th century and at the beginning of 20th century, became the chief preoccupation of Henry James's fiction filling his works with ghostly figures and encounters with the Other. As T. J. Lustig suggests in *Henry James and the Ghostly* most of the ghosts in Henry James's works "stand for the ability of texts to sustain their own peculiar laws; [they] defeat or transform the laws formulated by James's protagonists in their attempts to establish coherent and harmonious patterns of meaning, to control or elude their fate" (230), they suggest "that works of art sustain an enigmatic relation between the living and the dead" (231). Thus "that queer monster the artist"<sup>1</sup> seems to dwell in both dimensions – the real and the supernatural, guarding the threshold of the "haunted chamber" of writing. In this sense, the ghosts we encounter swarming from the pages of the stories from the 1890s and of the autobiographical works from his fourth stage, *The American Scene*, *A Small Boy and Others*, *Notes of a Son and Brother* and The Prefaces to the New York Edition can be interpreted as James's exorcising of the 'Other' writer/self he could have become had he stayed in his native country.<sup>2</sup>

Such an explanation of the presence of the occult in Henry James's writing leaves, however, without explanation a curious instance of using the ghostly in describing the contemporary state of the nation. In his re-evaluation of his native country seen after almost a quarter of a century's absence in the book *The American Scene*, Henry James repeatedly uses ghostly imagery when talking about the new immigrants who have become such a prominent part of the American nation.

In his encounters with the Jews of New York, the Italians and Armenians, as well as in his recollections of his visit to the South, Henry James is as if haunted by a racial Other who cannot be interpreted only along the autobiographical and artistic lines employed by most of the studies of *The American Scene*.



On the other hand, books such as Sara Blair's *Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation* concentrates on the performative character of the racial and national identities constructed throughout the book and the way in which "James's texts work contextually both to preserve and to exploit the inherent instability of racial identity in the era of modernity. Their effect is not [...] to consolidate a reified literary "power," writ in the habits and values of high gentility, so much as to offer competing tales of the tribe: to dramatize, at least intermittently, the consequences of ritual gestures of broadly racial identification, naming, and exclusion" (5–6) rather than on the employment of the ghostly to achieve these ends.

That is why the present essay will try to look closer at all these instances and offer a hypothesis of why the ghostly became the most appropriate medium for dealing with the problems of the American nation at the beginning of the 20th century. As an attempt to broaden the lens and diminish the distortion every dissection of a national culture brings, a comparison with the Bulgarian socio-cultural milieu of that time would be attempted in search of multicultural differences and similarities that could bring us one step closer to an understanding of the process of "imagining" oneself as belonging to a particular nation.

Any such attempt is inevitably linked to clearing some ground around the terms race and ethnicity which have overgrown with meaning throughout the last a hundred and something years. In his provocative study of whiteness, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Matthew Frye Jacobson argues that "American scholarship on immigration has generally conflated race and color, and so has transported a late-twentieth-century understanding of 'difference' into a period whose inhabitants recognized biologically based 'races' rather than culturally based 'ethnicities'" (6).<sup>3</sup> Jacobson goes on to describe race as residing "not in nature but in politics and culture" (9), "an invented category" (4), that can be filled up with meaning depending on the cultural moment and the power relations at a particular cultural site. Sara Blair's understanding is very similar when she talks about the "fraught emptiness of race's signifying terms of modernist capital" and "the currency of race as a dramatically shifting signifier whose every instantiation [...] performs a different social meaning" (8).

What then could the relation of this fictional narrative, the race, be to the ghostly? In a much-discussed passage from *The American Scene* Henry James visits the Jewish Ghetto in New York. The text abounds in images and metaphors both from the zoological world and the mechanical one. Very unexpectedly among them crops up a ghost:



It was as if we had been thus, in the crowded, hustled roadway, where multiplication, multiplication of everything, was the dominant note, at the bottom of some vast sallow aquarium in which innumerable fish, of overdeveloped proboscis, were to bump together, for ever, amid heaped spoils of the sea [...] As overflow, in the whole quarter, is the main fact of life [...] the scene hummed with the human presence beyond any I had ever faced in quest even of refreshment; producing part of the impression, moreover, no doubt, as a direct consequence of the intensity of the Jewish aspect. This, I think, makes the individual Jew more of a concentrated person, savingly possessed of everything that is in him, than any other human, noted at random – or is it simply, rather, that the unsurpassed strength of the race permits of the chopping into myriads of fine fragments without loss of race-quality? There are small strange animals, known to natural history, snakes or worms, I believe, who, when cut into pieces, wriggle away contentedly and live in the snippet as completely as in the whole. So the denizens of the New York Ghetto, heaped as thick as the splinters on the table of a glass-blower, had each, like the fine glass particle, his or her individual share of the whole hard glitter of Israel. This diffused intensity, as I have called it, causes any array of Jews to resemble (if I may be allowed another image) some long nocturnal street where every window in every house shows a maintained light. The advanced age of so many of the figures, the ubiquity of the children, carried out in fact this analogy; they were all there for race, and not, as it were, for reason: that excess of lurid meaning, in some of the old men's and old women's faces in particular, would have been absurd, in the conditions, as a really directed attention – it could only be the gathered past of Israel mechanically pushing through. The way, at the same time, this chapter of history did, all that evening, seem to push, was a matter that made the “*ethnic*” apparition again sit like a *skeleton* at the feast. It was fairly as if I could see the *spectre* (all italics mine) grin while the talk of the hour gave me, across the board, facts and figures, chapter and verse, for the extent of the Hebrew conquest of New York [...] Phantasmagoric for me, accordingly, in a high degree, are the interesting hours I here glance at content to remain – setting in this respect, I recognize, an excellent example to all the rest of the New York phantasmagoria [...] For what did it all really come to but that one had seen with one's eyes the New Jerusalem on earth [...] in its far-spreading light and its celestial serenity of multiplication? There it was [...] – rich, so peculiarly, for the eye, in that complexity of fire-escapes [...] the appearance to which they often most conduce is that of the spaciouly organized cage for the nimbler class of animals in some great zoological garden. This general analogy is irresistible – it seems to offer, in each district, a little world of bars and perches and swings for human squirrels and monkeys.” (100–102)



This long quote is necessary in order to try and decipher the use of the ghostly in this particular passage. If, as T. J. Lustig puts it “ghosts are as old as writing [...] [and] the history of literature is bound up with the ghostly” (1), then does it matter if the ghost is an “ethnic” one? It seems that it does.

If one assumes together with Peter Beidler, who is primarily concerned with *The Turn of the Screw* and its characters, that “Henry James knew the people who were at the very center of certain controversies about ghosts and demons, that he had read widely in the published books and articles about such subjects and that he was careful to write [...] [his works] in such a way that it would have sounded realistic to those at least generally familiar with spiritualism and psychical research” (16), it is possible to start questioning the very nature of the “occurrence” described in this passage. This could either return us back to the famous Wilson/Heilman debate over the reality of the ghosts in *The Turn of the Screw*,<sup>4</sup> or it could be taken for yet another instance of the ability of the ghostly to function across generic boundaries, “its ability to slip through conceptual meshes and cross categorical borders” (Lustig 7), which I believe is the case here.

The attempt to give form to the experience of race has produced an over-profusion of imagery. There is a certain pattern, however, in the order in which the different images appear. Henry James starts with a strictly zoological imagery – that of the deformed fish, moves through the violently crippled image of the cut-into-pieces worms onto the human squirrels and monkeys. The first and the last images also involve containment, total depravity of freedom imposed on these living creatures by the humans, while the middle image is a kind of variation on this topic, another example of how people could exercise their power over self-unconscious subjects. In between we have as if another wave of the “restless analyst’s” imagination connecting the ethnic other with the world of inorganic matter again transformed by man – the myriads of fine glass splinters chopped by the glass-blower and the maintained light of the street windows. The deformity of the natural world – in all cases imposed by man and the inhuman spirit of the urbanized images of the glass-blower and the street could be taken as a direct indictment on the new industrialized age, as an attempt to fill in the “emptiness of race’s signifying terms of modernist capital.”<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, it is obvious that what all the central figures in these images lack is exactly human consciousness. The immediate derogatory implication notwithstanding, it seems that in both cases the ghost that appears right in the middle of this complex, or to use the word



that most often is applied to H. James's writings, "ambiguous" pattern of images, radically changes the viable meanings of the whole.

The ghostly, seen from the 'modern' perspective of New Spiritualism, as has been already mentioned, is about communication, a communication between different consciousnesses and that seems to be the role of the "ethnic apparition" – to achieve this kind of communication that looks impossible on the level of 'real' life between the genteel, white, male<sup>6</sup> writer and the ethnic non-gendered ("the old and the children") illiterate<sup>7</sup> Other. Thus it is possible to see the function of the ghostly as another instance of "blurring boundary lines of self and other," as fashioning oneself as "a marginal man of double consciousness – at once "inquiring stranger" and "initiative native."<sup>8</sup>

There are two more aspects of this image that ask for consideration before any conclusive interpretation is reached. The very image of the "ethnic apparition" is very significantly positioned at "the feast," grinning at the observer. To find a plausible explanation to this choice of setting, it seems necessary to look for more clues in the text. At the very beginning of the chapter on New York, where we find the description of the ghetto, there is a passage describing Henry James's impressions of the Italian neighborhood in New York which, though containing no apparitions, uses vivid gastronomic imagery in an attempt to appropriate the "alien-ness" of the native landscape:

If it be asked why, the alien still striking you so as an alien, the singleness of impression, throughout the place, should still be so marked, the answer, close at hand, would seem to be that the alien himself fairly makes the singleness of impression. Is not the universal sauce essentially his sauce, and do we not feel ourselves, feeding, half the time, from the ladle, as greasy as he chooses to leave it for us, that he holds out? (90)

It seems that the ghostly image that we are to encounter several pages later is exactly the hand that holds this ladle. This is strengthened by the subsequent imagery in this chapter used in musing over the possibility of creating a new "American" identity out of the melting pot of ethnicity. One of the passages, for example, starts with the vexing questions:

What *does* become of the various positive properties, on the part of certain of the installed tribes, the good manners, say, among them, as to which the process of shedding and the fact of eclipse come so promptly into play? [...] And if they are not extinguished, into what pathless tracts of the native atmosphere do they virtually, do they



provisionally, and so all undiscoverably, melt?" to go on with the warning: "but may not the doubt remain of whether the extinction of qualities ingrained in generations is to be taken for quite complete" and to end with another gastronomic image: "but the speculation, at any rate, irresistibly forced upon us, is a sign of the interest, in the American world, of what I have called the "ethnic" outlook. The cauldron, for the great stew, has such circumference and such depth that we can only deal here with ultimate syntheses, ultimate combinations and possibilities. (98-99)

If we resist the first impulse to interpret this image in light of the "melting pot" idea, one of the cornerstones of the theories that evolved at the beginning of the century for the understanding of the American nation,<sup>9</sup> we can find a possible interpretation for the "feast" at which the "ethnic apparition" sits. It is this "great stew" that the apparition enjoys, re-affirming H. James's warning against all these contemporaries of his who believed in the creation of a homogenous American nation out of the immense variety of nationalities who had come to seek the Promised Land.

The same gastronomic imagery re-surfaces when Henry James travels through the South – another region where the racial is of primal importance. And while in much of American literature race, as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. claims, "has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems" (5), for Henry James it acquires much larger connotations.

No kind of person [...] is a very good kind, and still less a very pleasing kind, when its education has not been made to some extent by contact with other kinds, by a sense of the existence of other kinds, and to that degree, by a certain relation to them. This education may easily, at a hundred points, transcend the teaching of the big brick school-house, for all the latter's claim to universality. The last dose ever administered by the great wooden spoon so actively plied there is the precious bitter-sweet of a sense of proportion; yet to miss that taste, ever, at the table of civilization is to feel ourselves seated surely too much below the salt. (315)

Now it becomes obvious that the "feast" from the initial image is not just an ordinary feast, it stands for our own civilization, it is the place where the whole mankind meets in order to establish at least some kind of communication. In this context the ghostly acquires new dimensions, being equated not only with the trivial but essential human activity of eating but with one of the most ritualized of social events – the formal dinner as well.



Thus "the feast" turns into one of those liminal sites where the different could become similar, could cross the threshold of otherness and finally enter into a dialogue with the Other.

This possibility, however, in a chiastic movement, seems to be denied by the image of the "skeleton." It is possible to say that this is just another figure of speech used for the sake of verbal variety but this is hardly possible with such a writer as Henry James, who believed that form is everything. Rather the oxymoronic figure of a "skeleton at a feast" suggests the depravity of the new Americans and the need for nourishment, the great stew in this case, for them to become full-blood citizens.

Such an interpretation seems to be supported by the other instance when the ghostly is explicitly connected to the ethnic. In another famous episode when the "restored absentee" visits Ellis Island, and is confronted by the "poignant and unforgettable" drama of the newly-arrived immigrants, he is compared to a person who has just seen a ghost: "So is stamped, for detection, the questionably privileged person who has had an apparition, seen a ghost in his supposedly safe old house" (66).

In most of the interpretations of this passage, the ghost is connected to the possibility H. James would envisage of the existence of an alter ego of himself in "The Jolly Corner," where according to Peter Buitenhuis, he is in some sense encountering the American ghost he left behind some 23 years ago (86-7). Or as T. J. Lustig puts it: "One could therefore argue that Brydon's [the protagonist from "The Jolly Corner"] other is at some level also James's other: not the self he was, the self whose gaps *The American Scene* retrospectively filled out, but the self he might have been, the writer he might have become had he remained in his native land" (225). This, however do not give any clue to the possible connection between the ghostly and the ethnic, which as all these examples suggest, is of vital importance for Henry James. The presence of the ghost rather than being just threatening seems here to imply also the impossibility of answering to the famous question asked by Crèvecoeur "What, then, is the American, this new man?" (68). In *The American Scene* H. James instead of answering returns the question inquiring: "Which is the American [...] – which is not the alien?" (95), thus denying the possibility for a straight, unambiguous answer and defeating all the populist views from the beginning of the century in which the American nation was to be built on the basis of uniformity and the Anglo-Saxon conformity. In the era of multiculturalism this seems something not unique at all, even trivial but for the first years of the 20th century it was a revolutionary idea that was brought to the



readers in a typically Jamesian way – combining the two most unlikely notions – the occult and the ethnic.

It is really interesting that a similar phenomenon occurred at the same time in Bulgaria, too. Though not so much a literary phenomenon than a socio-cultural one, the teaching of Petar Danov, strangely mixed the occult and the ethnic in some of its aspects. In his explanation of human development he equates human history to the development of human consciousness and talks about several “root races” as he terms them: Lemurian or the third race, which was characterized by the development of the primary collective consciousness; Atlantic or the fourth race characterized by the beginning of the development of the private consciousness; White or Arian or the fifth race characterized by the individual consciousness, whose representatives we are. The occult ‘meets’ this racial history in Danov’s firm conviction that the whole mankind was at the threshold of a new era that would see the ascent of the new, sixth race, “a transition from human beings to angels, in which all would be prophets and seers.” (ДЪНОВ 87).

Quite often Danov’s teaching and the fact that he had in some estimates more than 200,000 followers<sup>10</sup> has been explained as a consequence of the deep moral, social and political catastrophe that Bulgaria faced after the WWI.<sup>11</sup> The “white brothers and sisters” as his disciples called themselves believed that they were the true spiritual heirs to the Bogomils, the Bulgarian heretics who more or less changed Medieval Europe<sup>12</sup> and in this sense the whole teaching can be characterized as “a mixture of Christianity, gnosticism, occultism, mysticism, theosophy, pantheism and [...] above all the personal clairvoyance of the Master Petar Danov” (343) as D. Diulgerov and Il. Tsonevski described it in 1937.

The present essay, however, is not interested so much in the full impact of Danov’s teaching but of the fact that approximately at the same time in Bulgaria the two notions of the occult and the ethnic became inseparable in such an influential teaching. It is necessary to mention here that, very much in support of Martha Banta’s words that “whether for good or ill, Modern Spiritualism was one of America’s gifts to the [...] world” (9), Petar Danov spent seven years, from 1888 to 1895, in the USA where he graduated from the School of Theology of Boston University in 1893 and got a medical certificate from the same School in 1894. He, in fact, witnessed one of the moments of great fervor of Modern Spiritualism in the USA, in one of the greatest spiritual centers in the country, where all were “witches and wizards, mediums, and spirit-rappers, and roaring radicals” as Mrs. Luna, Olive Chancellor’s sister, describes the Boston scene in H. James’s 1886 novel



*The Bostonians*. And though the real impact of his teaching according to most of the researchers would be felt after the end of the WWI up to the WWII,<sup>13</sup> his formative years were the same years when H. James felt the impossibility of the existing science to explain the way the human consciousness worked and turned to the occult and the ghostly.

In the context of these cultural developments in Bulgaria at the beginning of the 20th century, it comes as no surprise that a group of young Bulgarian prose writers (Svetoslav Minkov, Vladimir Polyakov, Chavdar Mutafov, Georgi Raichev, etc.) from the 1920s would also turn to the ghostly in an attempt to suggest a mode of writing that would be radically different from the existing realistic one. Their contemporaries would try to define this new literary mode by inventing the label "diabolic." "The mysterious, the fleeting, and I would say exactly the fleeting, and not so much the mysterious, have always been within the circle of my interests,"<sup>14</sup> would confess years later Vladimir Polyakov, the unofficial spokesman of the group while Svetoslav Minkov would create stories such as "The House Next to the Last Street Lantern"<sup>15</sup> in which the new science in the face of the mathematician, Bogomil Verilov, who came to live in the house next to the last street lantern would chase away the last remnants of the romantic past in the form of the apparition who had lived in this house for centuries. Though meant as a grotesque mockery of the tales of supernatural events, this story written in 1929 is interesting with the twist of having a ghost defeated by a scientist, which is exactly the opposite of Henry James's story "The Private Life"<sup>16</sup> written in the 1890s, where the ghost locked in one of the hotel rooms, turns to be the other self of a famous writer who socializes while the ghostly figure writes in his room.

These stories though not that closely connected with the focus of this essay, the interrelations between the ghostly and the ethnic, can make clearer the functioning of the concept of the ghostly in the two literary cultures. While in the American context the ghostly had its legitimate place as another way of unveiling hidden truths and meanings, in the Bulgarian context it rather served the purpose of destroying traditional, patriarchal thinking and destabilizing the tradition of the classical realism in Bulgarian literature connected in most of the cases to the romantic idolatry of patriarchal traditions.<sup>17</sup> Somehow the ghostly was seldom to appear next to the racial in Bulgarian literature but as has been already discussed the greatest impetus of this possible union came from an esoteric teaching, which has mesmerized many including Albert Einstein himself. Whether it has inspired "that queer monster the artist" in Bulgaria to explore the racial through the ghostly remains still to be seen.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This is a phrase used by Henry James in a letter to Henry Adams from April 1914.
- <sup>2</sup> See T. J. Lustig.
- <sup>3</sup> See also W. Sollors who observes that "before the rise of the word 'ethnicity,' the word 'race' was widely used to refer to larger and smaller groupings of mankind: for example, the Irish race or the Jewish race" (38).
- <sup>4</sup> For more details see T. J. Lustig 5.
- <sup>5</sup> For a different interpretation see Beverly Haviland 257–63.
- <sup>6</sup> The scope of the present essay does not allow to go into the subtle gendered binaries around which the whole book is structured. For a discussion of this issue see Sheila Teahan 52–57. This question can also be connected to what has come to be called "whiteness" in American literary history. See especially Toni Morrison and more specifically on H. James see Kenneth Warren (1994) as well as the debate between Sara Blair, Ross Posnock, Kenneth Warren and Walter Benn Michaels in *The Henry James Review* 16 (1995).
- <sup>7</sup> There are constant references in the book to the "strange" language of the new Americans, the most famous being the lament of the author that "the accent of the very ultimate future, in the States, may be destined to become the most beautiful on the globe and the very music of humanity (here the "ethnic" synthesis shrouds itself thicker than ever); but whatever we shall know it for, certainly we shall not know it for English – in any sense for which there is an existing literary measure" (106).
- <sup>8</sup> R. Posnock 274.
- <sup>9</sup> In 1909 Israel Zangwill would publish his play *The Melting Pot* which would give name to the process of assimilation and President T. Roosevelt would salute it as the best piece of the dramatic art ever. (For a discussion of this idea see Sollors).
- <sup>10</sup> See К. Златев. Личността и учението на Петър Дънов. С., 1994, с. 31.
- <sup>11</sup> As D. Mihalchev claims: "Обаче войните и необикновено големите нещастия, които ги съпроводи, раздрусаха душите на хиляди хора и семейства и създадоха благоприятна почва за разширението на окултизма и мистиката" (Михалчев 126).
- <sup>12</sup> For a very detailed study of Danov's teaching and its role in the Bulgarian socio-cultural context see the MA thesis of A. Georgieva.
- <sup>13</sup> I do not want to imply that there are no followers of this teaching nowadays but since this is beyond the interests of this essay, I would not deal with this side of the issue.
- <sup>14</sup> Пиндигов, А., Ал. Пиндигов. Владимир Полянов. Анкета. С., БАН, 1988, с. 28.
- <sup>15</sup> Минков 33–39.
- <sup>16</sup> James, 1986: 189–232.
- <sup>17</sup> For a fuller discussion of the place of "diabolic" prose in Bulgarian literature and its relatedness to Bulgarian and European modernism see Nikolai Aretov and Marieta Ivanova-Girginova.



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This is the second book in the American Studies Series that has gathered the work of various academics from the field of American Studies who have been connected in one or another way to Bulgaria. This has given the specific focus of most of the essays, namely the cross-cultural approach to important issues from the fields of literary and cultural studies, historiography, political science and translation and reception theory. The essays look at such contested notions of today as race, ethnicity, national identity, multiculturalism, postcolonialism, gender, ideology, crisis-resolution and electoral practices. The cross-cultural perspective helps to overcome the rigid boundaries of the separate academic fields in search of the productive interdisciplinary overlappings within the humanities.

The collection will be of interest both to researchers and students from various disciplines and especially to those interested in the rapidly growing American Studies field. It can be used by university teachers and students alike to enrich their discussions in American and Bulgarian literature and culture, political science and history classes.

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